Rosamond Lehmann : a modern writer.

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Rosamond Lehmann:
A Modern Writer

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Abstract

This study argues for Rosamond Lehmann's place among enduring women writers of the twentieth century. Lehmann has been criticized by reviewers for being too much of a "women's novelist". She is typically regarded as a romantic novelist whose forte lies in exploring the hearts of women in love. From her lyrical descriptions, she is shown to be skilled in the use of image, but often little else. Likewise her texts have been reproached for being too narrow in scope and for failing to deal with the social issues of her time.

By placing her work within the modernist tradition of literary experiment and its related examination of gender, this dissertation will challenge the view of Rosamond Lehmann as seen as a "feminine" novelist, with limited scope. It will examine Lehmann's work over the years, and argue for her place, not as a "Modernist", such as Virginia Woolf or Dorothy Richardson, but as a pioneer of twentieth-century fiction, beginning with Dusty Answer. Accordingly I will study Lehmann's narrative technique, and the influence of the two World Wars in her texts. I will explore the role of self,

and address the problem of individuality, as Lehmann saw it, and of preserving this self within the confines of society. And I will demonstrate how her examination of the inner lives of her characters, and her treatment of gendered identities establishes her as an prominent figure in the exploration into the modern consciousness, more often associated with her acclaimed contemporaries, such as Elizabeth Bowen, Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing, May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson.

Throughout the examination of the above, this thesis will also attempt to illustrate that Lehmann's work is distinct in its tendency not to judge. Yet she has been criticized for not taking a moral stand on her characters. This paper will show that if she were to do so, one point her work is trying to reveal would be lost: Lehmann's aim is to show the limitations of a judgmental, as opposed to an aesthetic, attitude.

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Introduction

In 1927 Dusty Answer was published and made Rosamond Lehmann famous overnight. The novel became an instant best seller in England, France and America. Dusty Answer more than any of Lehmann's other novels draws on the traditions of the past, and we see Lehmann as a product of Edwardian England. Three years later A Note in Music was published, and outwardly appeared the opposite of Dusty Answer with its differences in setting and style. But technically these two novels were similar. Then in 1932 came the seemingly simplistic Invitation to the Waltz. Yet its more comic tone was a departure from Lehmann's earlier works. Its sequel The Weather in the Streets (1936) was yet again a departure from prior works with its psychological approach and greater emotional depth. Eight years later The Ballad and the Source was published and nearly ten years after it The Echoing Grove. With their experiments in narrative and chronology, these two novels were different from any of Lehmann's previous texts. The harsh realism of The Echoing Grove was far removed from the romantic tone of Dusty Answer. By

this time Lehmann, while ever aware of her debt to Victorianism, was welcoming the innovation of the twentieth century, with its changes in societal structure and artistic expression, due primarily to the First and Second World Wars. Her short stories were published in 1946; her partial autobiography, The Swan in the Evening: Fragments of an Inner Life in 1967; and finally, in 1976, her last work, A Sea-Grape Tree.

Thus, Lehmann's work spanned nearly sixty years and yet she wrote only seven novels, one play and one book of short stories.[1] Throughout all her works her focus remained the inner lives of her heroines. Yet her works should not be dismissed as narrow or mere romance plots[2], for they encompass much more. Lehmann's novels clearly illustrate that she was sensitive to the cultural changes brought about by the wars, and she attempted to convey these feelings in a narrative that was distinct from previous modes of fictional expression.

Reviews of Lehmann's works usually took two forms: praise for her "lyrical prose" and "feminine sensibility," and praise of these, followed by a caveat that these must be combined with more substantial material--without which she can not be considered a serious author. George Dangerfield states that she must enlarge her

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[1]Rosamond Lehmann wrote one play, published in 1939 titled "No More Music." This thesis does not address the play.

[2]See Rosalind Miles, The Fiction of Sex: Themes and Functions of Sex Difference in the Modern Novel (London: Vision Press, 1974) pp. 122-23.

horizon and move away from memory and childhood; if she does not her

> beautiful writing will lose its power with us, delicate observation grow stale, even enchantment itself become no more than a conjuring with words. And Miss Lehmann, if she set her imagination free, could take a major place in modern British Fiction.

He also criticizes her

> delight in the minor situation; [...] her preoccupation with people who , by age or character, are incapable of full experience--[3]

Another reviewer stated that

> so long as her characters overindulge introspection (however accurate and stimulating) Miss Lehmann's novels will continue to lack vigor and depth. They remain frail and exquisite perfections; records of infinite sensitivity, small moments of beauty, tragedies muffled in cerebration. Seldom have so many gifts been concentrated on so few values.[4]

I hope to show that Lehmann indeed deserves a place in modern British fiction, and that her characters' introspection is a part of the reason for thinking so. Lehmann's perceptive examination of the human heart and female emotions is decisively important in understanding an era, for personal and sexual experience is often intrinsically related to the social and historical.

Lehmann, along with several of her contemporaries, was expressing dissatisfaction with the existing novel. She would break

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[3]George Dangerfield, "Rosamond Lehmann and the Perilous Enchantment of Things Past," The Bookman, LXXVI, February 1933, pp. 172-73.

[4]Isabel Mallet, Review of The Ballad and the Source, New York Times, 1 April 1945, p. 4.

with convention by shifting the focus from the outer world to the inner world, from the omniscient narrator to the limited point of view, and from action to thinking and dreaming. In all her novels Lehmann's writing combines an understanding and implementing of new techniques, such as questioning of sexual identities, a psychoanalytic approach to character and experiments in narrative perspective and time sequence.

This dissertation will examine various related areas in which Lehmann is either a pioneer, or representative of modern developments in fiction: narrative technique; the response to both world wars; a resulting sense of isolation, and how this redefines the inner lives of women; new senses of difference and conflict in gender and sexuality; and finally how Lehmann's experience of modernity and individual alienation results in fictional forms which eschew judgmental objectivity.

By placing her work within the modernist tradition of literary experiment, this study will also challenge the view of Rosamond Lehmann as an amateur[5] writer and a "feminine" novelist, criticized for her limited scope and failure to deal with the social issues of her time.[6] "Feminine" in this sense is a derogatory term used to

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[5]Comment by J.B. Priestley to Rosamond Lehmann. See Mary Chamberlain, ed. Interview by Janet Watts, Writing Lives: Conversations Between Women Writers (London: Virago, 1988) p. 156.

[6]See George Dangerfield, "Rosamond Lehmann and the Perilous Enchantment of Things Past," The Bookman, February 1933; Clifton Fadiman, The Nation, June 1927; Diana Trilling, The Nation, vol. 160, 14 April 1945; Honor Tracy, "New Novels," The New Statesman

imply limitations in scope and subject. For example, Stanley J. Kunitz wrote pejoratively that "her work is unmistakably that of a woman".[7] I will argue that part of the reason Lehmann's writing has been dismissed in the past for its slightness is only because it is deceptive and remarkably subtle. If, at first glance, her fiction seems obvious or simplistic it is because, as Gillian Tindall explains, it is art that conceals art.[8]

Lehmann has also been criticized for not taking a stronger stance and establishing a moral background in which her characters can act. Diana E. LeStourgeon states that Lehmann "has no discernible moral or intellectual, social or political philosophies".[9] I would like to show that it is precisely because Lehmann does not make moral judgements of her characters that a sense of moral integrity pervades her writing.

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and Nation, XLV, 11 April 1953. Diana E. LeStourgeon, Rosamond Lehmann (New York: Twayne, 1965).

[7]Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds. Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1942) p.809.

[8]Gillian Tindall, Rosamond Lehmann: An Appreciation (London: Chatto & Windus, 1984) p. 7.

[9]Diana E. LeStourgeon, Rosamond Lehmann (New York: Twayne, 1965) p. 23.

Background

Rosamond Nina Lehmann was born on the 3rd of February 1901 into a family of writers, painters and musicians. Her father, Rudolph Chambers Lehmann, was at the same time an athlete, author, editor and contributor to Punch, founder of Granta, and Liberal Member of Parliament. Her mother, Alice Marie Davis Lehmann, was an American from New England, and had studied at Radcliffe. Lehmann proclaimed that she had received her humour from her father and her intellect from her mother.

Rosamond Lehmann was born, the second of four children, at Fieldhead at Bourne End, Buckinghamshire. The Thames-side home would form the source of many of Lehmann's later recollections and reminiscences, and is the setting on which Dusty Answer is based. Helen, two years older, married and had a family. Lehmann's younger sister, Beatrix was a highly accomplished actress and a communist. John Lehmann, the younger brother, was only partially successful as a writer, but a very notable editor. Both John and Beatrix were homosexual, and this may be in part why Lehmann writes of homosexuality so freely and without bias. But while Lehmann had no conflict with homosexuality, she did object to pornography, and in 1975 she had a falling out with John over his novel, In the Purely

Pagan Sense. She reconciled with him on his seventieth birthday and wrote a valedictory ode. (See appendix.)

In 1919 Lehmann went to Girton College, Cambridge, to read for a degree in modern languages. The college serves as the setting for the middle section of Dusty Answer. There, she met her first husband, Walter Leslie Runciman, whom she married a year after graduating in 1922. Marriage to Runciman was probably an escape route away from her mother. With him she could be free and independent, while, if unmarried, she had to be chaperoned. Her marriage with him, however, quickly proved unfulfilling. One problem was that he did not want children, because he only had one testicle and felt he would pass this trait along. Therefore, when Lehmann did become pregnant, it was decided she would have an abortion, on which the abortion scene in The Weather in the Streets is based.

In 1928 she married the Honorable Wogan Philipps, an artist as well as the only member of the Communist Party who also had a seat in the House of Lords. With him she had two children, Hugo, born in 1929 and Sally, born five years later. The death of Lehmann's father, also in 1929, proved a traumatic event in her life. Like Judith Earle in Dusty Answer, Lehmann was closer to her father than to her mother, and, while he lived, his approval remained extremely important to her.

After her second novel, the family moved to Ipsden House in Oxfordshire, where they remained until 1939. In this new home,

Lehmann re-created her childhood home, not only in the sense of a beautiful upper-middle class home, but more importantly as a place that embodied artistic creativity, intellectual and political conversation, courtesy, graciousness and friendship. It became a gathering place for many prominent artists and writers of the time, much in the way that Fieldhead had. It was here that she wrote her third and fourth novels.

Yet, like her first marriage, Lehmann's second one also ended in divorce. During the War Lehmann and her children moved to a small house on the Berkshire Downs. She contributed stories to her brother's New Writing and wrote The Ballad and the Source. In 1941 she began her nine-year relationship with Cecil Day-Lewis, but this proved anything but stable. In 1950 Lewis left her for a much younger woman and Lehmann never recovered from it. The pain of betrayal and disillusionment, experienced in all her relationships, and felt by her to go inevitably hand in hand with love, are directly incorporated into her texts. This aspect of her work will be examined later.

However, even more traumatic than Day-Lewis' leaving, was the sudden and early death of her daughter Sally in 1958 at the age of twenty-four. Yet Sally's death was something with which she eventually comes to terms. Sally's death, combined with Lehmann's recovery from it, formed a turning point in her life. She wrote no more fiction until A Sea-Grape Tree.

Rosamond Lehmann was created a Fellow of the Royal Society of

Literature in 1982. She was also Vice-President of International Pen and a member of the Council of the Society of Authors. She died in March 1990.[10]

In all Lehmann's texts, one sees obvious parallels with her life, yet to suggest that each novel is autobiographical would be misleading. She did what novelists usually do, taking experiences and compilations of people out of her own life and using them in or for the lives of her fictional characters. I hope the above background information will help to put into context the following examination of her works.

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[10]The preceding background information was taken from an interview with Anna Philipps-Woodhouse, 23 March 1992.

Narrative Technique and Time Sequence

Lehmann is not, and should not be, considered a modernist in the way that Virginia Woolf or James Joyce were, for her work has not the innovation that these, and other writers who fall under the term "modernist", had. She can, however, be considered modern, in part because of her narrative technique and experimentation with time sequence, beginning in the first quarter of the twentieth century and continuing until her last novel.

Before examining Lehmann's narrative technique in each of her novels, an attempt to argue for her evolving modern style, I will first look at what it meant historically to be a woman writer at the time when Lehmann was writing.

If the significance and place of the woman writer was a topic for debate in the nineteenth century, it received a drastic redefinition in the early part of the twentieth century. Historically, these years brought the first attempt to establish women's writing on its own terms. This does not mean, however, that women did not continue to write in the style of the old Victorian novel, for many did. But the most influential of women writers were seen, particularly during the period between the wars, as expressing through their work the feminine consciousness in a way

that was clearly different from that of the male.

Two movements transpired in England in the early decades of the twentieth century that helped bring about this change. One was the awakening realization and subsequent struggle among women for equality and independence. The other was the birth of modernism, with Ezra Pound's famous, "Make It New." Explaining how these two movements affected women in particular, Sydney Janet Kaplan writes:

> Women were living in a period of transition. They were achieving some degree of economic and social freedom, but they were still expected to conform to traditional concepts of femininity. The cultural changes they had brought about were being conveyed through the medium of the popular realistic novel, but the effect of those changes on their psyches could not be expressed in this form since the larger share of the conflict lay beneath the surface with their divided consciousness. Thus it soon became apparent that the more fitting vehicle for interpreting the present reality of women's lives would be a novel of consciousness. It is not at all surprising, therefore, to find women writers among the important innovators of the modern novel.[11]

Those women most often associated with this movement include Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein and Dorothy Richardson, among others. What the works of these women share with those of Rosamond Lehmann is the common experience of the spiritual voyage, the search for identity and meaning.

One might be inclined to describe Lehmann as a social realist, but her work belongs, in fact, to the kind of twentieth-century fiction usually labelled psychological realism or literary impressionism. Lehmann saw her own writing as fragmentary, and

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[11]Sydney Janet Kaplan, Feminine Consciousness in the Modern British Novel, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975) p. 1.

herself as "nothing but a screen for chaotic images".[12] In her essay, "The Future of the Novel" Lehmann suggests an association between the act of narrative and feminine creativity. She speaks of the novel as a work whose

> ... genesis is the image, or isolated images which have become embedded in the mass of accumulated material in the author's "centre." When the moment comes (it cannot be predicted, but can be helped on by the right kind of passivity) these images will start to become pregnant, to illuminate one another, to condense and form hitherto unsuspected relationships. The characters will begin to emerge, to announce their names and reveal their faces, voices, purposes, and destinies. The author does not "invent" his characters or know about them from the onset. They reveal themselves gradually to him in and through that state of doubtful conviction which I have mentioned before. Characters must make plot or action; never the other way around.[13]

Many of Lehmann's heroines, for example both Olivia Curtis and Rebecca Landon, serve to fulfill the author's definition of the function of the author as a passive instrument. Lehmann is at times passive, and power seems to be contained in the characters. In this way Lehmann's work can be described as organic, and there is an organic unity of the form and theme of her novels as well. For example, about Dusty Answer she said, "there wasn't a conscious plan. I think the whole thing came from my unconscious". And concerning her writing in general she stated:

> It does all come out of the unconscious, my unconscious, which is very well stocked - with images, memories, sounds, voices,

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[12]Rosamond Lehmann, A Letter to a Sister (London: The Hogarth Press, 1931) p. 15.

[13]Rosamond Lehmann, "The Future of the Novel?", Britain Today, no. CXII, June 1946, p. 10.

> relationships. There comes a moment when they seem to coalesce and fuse, and suddenly something takes shape, like seeing a whole landscape with figures, or a whole thing-you have a vision of it, instantaneous: you see what's to be done. But then you've got to discover it- work at it, heave it up from underground.[14]

But there is also power in the process of narrative that would belie Lehmann's apparent passivity or unconsciousness. Therefore, while Lehmann was "surprised when authors [had] perfectly clear plans about novels they [were] going to write", and believed the author to be "a kind of receptive screen upon which are projected the images of persons" or a "weak aimless unsystematic unresisting instrument"[15], she also accorded tremendous importance and attention to narrative in each work of art.[16]

Lehmann believed that writers should be meticulous with words and grammar. She felt a novel should be a work of art, at least in terms of composition, with careful attention given to artistic style.[17]

In The Swan in the Evening Lehmann expressed her literary debt, not to Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson or Katherine Mansfield but to the Victorians, "literary giants[...], revered,

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[14]Janet Watts, op.cit., p. 156.

[15]Rosamond Lehmann, "The Red-Haired Miss Daintreys," The Gipsy's Baby and Other Stories (London: Collins, 1946) pp. 57, 58.

[16]See Sydney Janet Kaplan, op.cit., pp. 110-13 for more on these ideas.

[17]See Rosamond Lehmann, 'Rosamond Lehmann Reading,' in "New Soundings" by John Lehmann, New World Writing, no. 2, 1952, p. 49.

loved, and somehow intimately known."[18] Her novels often parallel the patterns of several nineteenth-century female texts, in that they present a woman's awakening knowledge of the world. Dusty Answer for example is a novel of awakening, a literary form for which gender is formative. But as Judy Simons points out, Lehmann reworks traditional narrative patterns, revising them to fit the twentieth-century consciousness, thus forming a bridge to other writers before and after.

> The basic ingredients of the nineteenth-century "woman's novel"--the romance plot, the heroine of sensibility, the moral awakening--are critically reworked so as to invest them with a significance appropriate to the climate of cultural destabilization that existed in England during this period.[...] Rosamond Lehmann's application of the romance plot to contemporary women in her novels testifies to her own deep involvement in this female 'project[19]'. Certainly her major works find their inspiration in the age-old device of the love story, but Lehmann's use of this conventional structure is deliberately deceptive. For Lehmann, like Woolf and Mansfield, rewrites the habituated conventions so as to expose the seductive quality of the romance format, and by so doing reveal its political implications.[20]

In The Novel and the Modern World David Daiches writes, "The communication of the private world requires much more subtle

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[18]Rosamond Lehmann, The Swan in the Evening (London: Collins, 1967) p. 69.

[19]See Simons p. 25 or Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985) p. 4.

[20]Judy Simons, Rosamond Lehmann "Modern Writers Series" (London: MacMillan, 1992) pp. 25-26.

technique than that of the public world."[21] Rosamond Lehmann's novels are concerned almost exclusively with the private worlds of her characters to the extent that outwardly not a lot can appear to happen. In this respect her works are similar to those of Ivy Compton-Burnett, although Compton-Burnett's novels are set in the Victorian era. Reviewing Elders and Betters Edwin Muir wrote:

> Wars come and go, nations fall, but Miss Compton-Burnett goes imperturbably on her way. [...] There is not another contemporary novelist who is so close to life and so remote from events.[22]

But it is Compton-Burnett's dark view of human relations in this book, as in all her works, that makes her so admirable as a writer.

Likewise while Lehmann's novels do address outward events tangentially, it is her portrayal of the emotional and psychological action accompanying them that is the most ambitious and admirable. She experiments, not so much with dramatic technique, but by probing the female sensibility and human relationships. Like many of her contemporaries (Elizabeth Bowen, Doris Lessing or Jean Rhys), she explores a purely feminine consciousness; these writers are largely responsible for creating the impression that women's writing consists of the heightened subjective.

Thus Lehmann is distinct from her predecessors in her complete

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[21]David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1948) p. 10.

[22]Edwin Muir, review of Elders and Betters, The Listener, 1944.

focus on the feminine point of view. Until The Echoing Grove she made no effort to present the man's side of events. However, Lehmann omits the male's point of view, not so much as a deliberate attempt to challenge the supremacy of the masculine novel as Dorothy Richardson did, for example, but merely in an attempt to define the women's viewpoint, which until recently had been marginalised or distorted. Her method consists of recording the developing consciousness of her heroine, and of heavy use of the subjective to study the female psyche. The reader is denied the usual fictive guidelines, as factual information about the heroine is released only in pieces. Yet because Lehmann relies strongly on the subjective, she has been dismissed by critics for being "a woman's novelist." A look at Lehmann's narrative technique will reveal she was much more.

While Lehmann's use of the third person narrator predominates throughout her novels, her subtle switching to first person and occasionally to second person narration is a device that allows her to achieve greater depth and credibility in her characters. Whereas Lehmann is neutral concerning her characters' actions, as will be demonstrated later, she does however appear to control the reader, although perhaps unconsciously. Roland Barthes' distinction between "écrivant" and "écrivain"[23] would place her in the category of

[23]Roland Barthes, Le Plaisir du texte (Paris: Seuil, 1973).

"écrivant", for Lehmann presents her text, and while she does not dictate how a work should be interpreted, she does appear to hold on to an illusory belief, like that of the "écrivant," in intrinsic meaning.

Throughout her novels Lehmann uses the narrative technique of the limited point of view. This technique shows that the thoughts and emotions of the characters are of most importance. The thoughts, for example, of Judith Earle in Dusty Answer matter more than her actions. In Dusty Answer the events of the novel are revealed to the reader through the eyes of the sensitive and romantic Judith. There is an omniscient narrator for Judith, but it is not an impersonal one; it is Judith herself. Usually this narrator describes the thoughts in Judith's mind through the conventional third-person "she." Dusty Answer, like all of Lehmann's novels, is notable for its strong sense of atmosphere, primarily due to Judith's intense perceptions.

We are aware that, like Rebecca in The Ballad and the Source, Judith is young and in some ways immature, and her perceptions of other characters are interpreted thus. Yet we must take what information we are given. She herself is a character and therefore cannot present us with a completely objective point of view. Also like Rebecca, as Judith grows up during the course of the novel, her impressions and observations about people change and mature. For example, she is in awe of the mysterious children next door to her. Only gradually will she realized that she is as mysterious to

them as they are to her. She must find her own identity, recognizing that, as an incipient writer, she will always be an outsider.

Her perceptions are effectively revealed through Lehmann's use of the third-person; and her growth is illuminated by the numerous fragments of memories, conversations, sensual images and reflections that make up her consciousness. Yet these are not presented in a fragmented style as they will be in later works. Lehmann does not try to record Judith's stream of consciousness. The fragments are presented in a logical order by the third-person narrator. The technique of the limited point of view is especially appropriate for the study of Judith who views the world in relation to herself.

In the beginning of the novel Judith's notions about the cousins are sentimental and romantic, and often narrow in scope; she never imagines their thoughts about anything else except herself. For example, Martin and Roddy unexpectedly visit her one day and Martin says:

> 'Julian has got some tiresome people we don't like so we escaped, and Roddy suggested coming to find you.' Roddy raised his eyebrows, smiling faintly, 'Well, we both suggested it,' continued Martin with a blush. 'May we really stay?'[24]

And Judith wonders, "Which, oh which one really suggested it?" From

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[24]Rosamond Lehmann, Dusty Answer (London: Chatto & Windus, 1930 Phoenix Library) p. 93.

this passage we learn several things. It is clear to the reader that it was Martin's idea, but Judith, longing for it to have been Roddy's, allows herself to believe it was. The reader does not see any more than Judith, but can draw different conclusions from hers. From this it is clear that Judith often reveals more about herself and her own feelings than about what she perceives.

Her perceptions are usually astute if not entirely accurate, and she asserts them with an ingenuous and endearing humour. She is often able to laugh at herself, and this gives the novel a lightness and humour. The following passage illustrates her knowledge, if too late, of having made Jennifer Baird, her friend at Cambridge, into a person beyond reality:

> Jennifer's boxes stood packed and strapped in a corner. Her personality had already, terrifyingly, been drained from her two rooms. There was now only a melancholy whisper of that which, during the two years of her tenancy, had filled the little space between her walls with a warm mystery. She had become identified with the quickening of imagination, the lyrical impulse. Oh how ridiculous, how sad, to have made one person into all poetry! To-morrow it would all be finished.(198)

She mistakenly believes that Jennifer had "been all [her] happiness for two years."(202) The reader sees otherwise, and Judith after Jennifer has left, regrets having ignored so many pursuits and people she might have enjoyed, having preferred instead to live with the Jennifer of her imagination. Judith remembers:

> There had been the girl who drew portraits and who had wanted you for a model. There had been the silent girl[...] all those countless others had offered themselves. There had been Martin ignored and neglected because he disliked Jennifer. And there had been books, far more books in far more libraries: and new

> poetry, new music, new plays,--a hundred intellectual diversions which you had but brushed against or missed altogether by secluding yourself within the limits of an unprofitable dream.(215-216)

Impressions are presented to the reader through Judith, and her perception changes as she grows up. Judith's development is illustrated by her changed perception of the same things at different times. In one example Cambridge, during her first year with Jennifer, is shrouded in mystery and beauty:

> Above the quiet secretly-stirring town, roofs, towers and spires floated in a pale gold wash of light. What was the mystery of Cambridge in the evening? Footfalls struck with a pang on the heart, faces startled with strange beauty, and every far appearing or disappearing form seemed significant. And when they got back to College, even that solid red-brick barrack was touched with mystery. The corridors were long patterns of unreal light and shadow.(158-59)

Even when she is leaving she still thought that the building "caressed with sunset, looked motherly and benign[...], secure and tranquil."(216) But when four months later she returns after disillusionment and heartbreak she sees only "the red-tiled floor, the cold polished walls, the official bleakness and decorous ugliness of the entrance hall",(347) She feels "the whole place was unfamiliar,"(348) "the place was terrible--a Dark Tower". And she wonders, "How had she been deluded for three years into imagining it friendly and secure--?"(350) Likewise when on vacation with her mother in France, Judith's perception of the other resort people in France changes abruptly after news of Martin's death. They became "grimacing faces, obscene bodies, chattering parrot and monkey voices; Hell's musicians, with vicious tunes and features dark with

unmentionable evil...."(322)

Judith's contrasting perceptions speak for Lehmann's own questioning. Lehmann's turning each judgement inside out, allows the reader a view from each perspective, but leaves no certain answer to life, or at best the dusty answer of death. Or as Judith realizes on leaving Cambridge, "The dream of wake, the dreams of sleep--which had it been?"(219)

By the end of the novel, Judith finally realizes she has never known Roddy, the boy she believed she loved so strongly. As she sits waiting for Jennifer, she suddenly catches a glimpse of Roddy and Tony:

> She watched them calmly, knew them without shock of alarm or surprise. [...] The old yearning to know, to understand, returned for a moment, and was followed by an utter blankness; and she knew that she had never known Roddy. He had never been for her. He had not once, for a single hour, become a part of real life. He had been a recurring dream, a figure seen always with abnormal clarity and complete distortion. The dream had obsessed her whole life with the problem of its significance, but now she was rid of it.(352-53)

Earlier in the novel, she is also unable to see Roddy clearly because she is insecure and confused. While dancing, Roddy laughs and jokes with her:

> 'You don't mean to tell me you never danced before?'
> 'Never.'
> 'Swear?'
> 'Cross my heart.'
> 'But of course,' said Roddy, 'you couldn't help dancing, such a beautiful mover as you.'
> He had really said that! She lifted her face and glowed at him: life was too, too rich.(80)

Again what Judith takes of momentous importance, Roddy probably

doesn't realize saying. This passage illustrates another of Rosamond Lehmann's concerns in writing: showing how we are revealed through love, the lack of it, the ecstasy of it, or the anguish of it. Love colours most of Judith's sensibilities, as it does for Grace in A Note in Music and Olivia in The Weather in the Streets. Although we are free to make our own assumptions, we tend to become caught up in Judith's impassioned impressions, and her emotions therefore set the tone of the novel.

The tone of the novel is further set by the immense amount of dialogue. The dialogue reinforces the present. Lehmann will bring the past into the text by recreating Judith's and the cousins' dialogue not only as young adults, but also as children. Lehmann's skill is revealed in these instances when she imitates the language between children. A scene from when they were children reveals Charlie showing Judith a pin and telling her that he found it,

> 'In my pudding at school.'
> 'Oh!'
> 'I nearly swallowed it.'
> 'Oh!'
> 'If I had I'd 'a' died.'
> He stared at her.
> 'Oh, Charlie!...'
> 'You can keep it if you like.'
> He was so beautiful, so gracious, so munificent that words failed....
> She put the pin in a sealed envelope and wrote on it, 'The pin that nearly killed C.F.' with the date....(13-14)

Another technique used in Dusty Answer is that of second person narration, which as Jonathan Raban accurately observes forges "an

intimate link between author, character and reader".[25] The following quotation in which Judith describes Mariella proves this true, for the reader feels a part of the action or process.

> She blew out her cheeks, stuffed a cushion in her knickers and strutted coarsely. That was irresistible. You had to squeal with laughter.(p. 7)

And in the passage below the reader is brought in still more:

> Supposing you looked like Mabel, would you love beauty even more passionately, or be so jealous of it that you hated it?(132)

All Lehmann's novels, particularly the early ones, are studies of memory and disillusionment. Contrast and flashback are techniques she employs successfully to portray the recurrent effect memory has on the individual. In the following passage Judith swims with Julian, and as he repeats Jennifer's familiar quotation, Judith is pierced with painful memories:

> And, in a flash, with the uttering of the last words, Jennifer came back, slipping the clothes down off white shoulder and breast, talking and laughing. A tide of memories; Jennifer's head burning in the sunlight, her body stooping towards the water--the whole of those May terms of hawthorn blossom and cowslips, of days like a warm drowsy wine, days bewildered with growing up and loving Jennifer, with reading Donne and Webster and Marlowe, with dreaming of Roddy.... Where had it all gone--Where was Jennifer?--Whom enchanting now?--How faintly remembering Judith? Compared with that tumultuous richness, how sickly, how wavering was this present feeling--what a sorry pretence. Would one ever be happy again?(307)

This kind of passage is effective, but also often represents the grounds for which she was criticized--her characters', and her own,

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[25]Jonathan Raban, The Techniques of Modern Fiction: Essays in Practical Criticism (London: Notre Dame University Press, 1969) p. 115.

reliance on the beautiful past. Frequently, however, Lehmann had reason for looking backwards, and it was not simply that she found it difficult to deal with the immediate present. The probing back into the past, for many writers, was a way to search for some explanation for the crisis of the times. Both fictional and autobiographical childhood took writers back to just before the First World War, and it was in the Edwardian period, seen part nostalgically, part critically, that causes were sought.

Lehmann's second novel, A Note in Music, is a text in which both the power and the failure of illusion appear to be connecting threads. The technique used to portray this is the reverse of that employed in Dusty Answer in that it presents the story through the eyes of several characters. Again Lehmann's tendency is to transfer the event described from the outer world of action to the inner world of thought and emotion. As the title implies, A Note in Music revolves around a matter of a few days and the characters' feelings and love affairs, the "notes in music," within these few days are what is of importance. Lehmann takes her title from Walter Savage Landor's epigraph, "But the present, like a note in music, is nothing but as it appertains to what is past and what is to come." The whole novel in fact is precisely a study of this one line, the characters confirming its truth. The epigraph describes Lehmann's works in general as they draw from the past, her family, her education, yet also anticipate the future. The past, present and

future merge and prove true what Grace Fairfax thinks, that, "Time was not real, except as one made it so. Why not bind it to one's purpose, make it servant instead of master."[26] This binding time to one's purpose is in fact what Lehmann attempts in her fiction, particularly the later novels.

Leaving the cinema with Tom, Grace thinks back to when they were newly married, fluctuating between the idea that "marrying him had arisen in some state of mental distortion only now perceived", and comfort in his presence. Echoing Landor "she lazily wondered if all emotional truths were impermanent, only a matter of changing moods and circumstances".(18-19)

A Note in Music, like Dusty Answer, studies memory and disillusion. Judith believes that "enchantment has vanished from the world," and may "never come back, save in memory".(335) It does come back in memory for Lehmann's characters, such as Grace, but frequently after the reverie there is an accompanying feeling of dissatisfaction. Grace's friend, Norah, ponders the working of time on the memory:

> It does not ease the burden of the past to share its recollections; for with each plunge into it, each withdrawal, something is left behind that weighs more heavily than the memory; something that can never be shared or imparted--a sense of accumulating unease, surprise and contrast, of going alone, in unsuspected isolation, on one's way; and worse, a comfortless suggestion that the way--life, in fact--is without continuity. Is it possible to look back from the present as if one watched the reel of a moving picture wound smoothly the

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[26]Rosamond Lehmann, A Note in Music (London: Virago, 1982) p. 165.

> reverse way from its close: to say, that time and that hour brought one inevitably, with only apparent deviation, to this hour, this place? No, as one rushes headlong, flying with Time, portions of life split off and float away, one little world after another; and looking back, one sees them behind one as stars and constellations.(76)

Lehmann's second novel is similar in its many themes to Chekhov's The Three Sisters, portraying the drabness of provincial life, the frustrations of individual ambitions, the dullness of marriage without love, and a longing to return to a time before. The sisters long to return to the gay life of Moscow they left eleven years earlier, and Grace longs for the south and her childhood life. Like Grace, the sisters lead a dull existence; the only diversions afforded are by this dream of returning to the past, and by the officers, much as Hugh affords Grace her reason for being.

In this novel Lehmann is concerned with the impact of one character, Hugh Miller, on several characters. A Note in Music employs an undramatized narrator to reveal to us the thoughts and feelings of these very different characters. But the narrator seems to give us little direct information; information is always tinged by the consciousness of one of the main characters. For example, in the beginning of the novel we are presented with Grace's pessimistic view of her marriage to Tom, while Tom merrily sings in the bath:

> She was dressing for dinner. Next door, she heard Tom splashing in his bath, and singing over and over again the refrain of one of his three tunes:
>
> "Oh, lucky Jim,

How ... wi .. en-vy--him."

Each time she heard the mournful bellow, the same memory cut across her exasperation. She remembered August, and her home, hundreds of years ago; and the garden fête on the sunny lawn.[...]

Since those days she had come a long way; yet where were the milestones, or the turning-places? There seemed nothing to look back on save a few freakish and capricious gleams assailing her at unexpected moments; and certainly, she thought (pulling on her stockings), there was nothing before her.(1-2)

Often a character's perception is distorted, as in the scene when Hugh comes to tea. Little things take on a heightened significance. Grace sees Hugh as beautiful and infallible, her image of him overblown. To herself she thinks:

> It would upset him a little to know that a person was unhappy: he had a kind face. But of course he would be puzzled too; perhaps a trifle scornful. He would think there must be some simple remedy.
>
> If only she could find out from him.... He seemed to have a secret of mastery, of confidence, of being at home in the world. He would disregard inauspicious detail, and be lucky, and know how to manage his life as he wanted it. (63)

We see, however, how large the gap between illusion and reality is when we are presented with Hugh's point of view after he leaves:

> By the time he reached his lodgings he was dripping wet. He took off his clothes and flung them on the floor. No hope of a bath, of course; but he must have at least a can of hot water.[...] Hateful room, he thought, looking around it:[...] No, it was *no good*,he could not stand it, he would chuck up his chance and go.[...] For he must admit to himself: he was not proof against the appalling onslaughts of loneliness. (64-65)

Presented also with Hugh's point of view, we see two opposing viewpoints of the same person. Lehmann simply presents them, but does not attempt to make a judgement. In this way Lehmann's writing

differs from that of some of her contemporaries, who seem preoccupied with presenting lessons to their readers, or whose short stories and novels are meant to teach the readers something about themselves. For instance in Elizabeth Taylor's "I Live in a World of Make Believe", a title that could well suit a Lehmann work, the first story of the volume Hester Lily and Twelve Short Stories deals with Mrs. Miller's desire to compete with her neighbor, Lady Luna, who represents a higher social class than the Millers. Mrs. Miller, however, believes the difference can be bridged by acquiring certain symbols of class. When she has Lady Luna and her daughter, Constance, in for a visit, they are interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Mrs. Miller's sister-in-law, Auntie Flo, who has brought along a dozen eggs, a jar of pickled cabbage, and a daughter infected with ringworm. Taylor impresses upon the reader the notion that people often blindly attempt to reach beyond the limitations of their lives or social class.[27] In contrast, Lehmann makes clear that Hugh is of a different class from Grace, but Hugh's position in society, instead of ostracizing Grace or producing fear in her, is what, along with his natural charisma, helps her.

In Invitation to the Waltz Lehmann uses a combination of the narrative techniques of Dusty Answer and A Note in Music. The novel is seemingly simple, yet technically complex. At different moments,

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[27]Elizabeth Taylor, "I Live in a World of Make Believe," Hester Lily and Twelve Short Stories (New York: Viking, 1954).

the perspectives of other characters are revealed, but it is Olivia's experience of two days in her life that provides the fabric of the story. In the same way that Jane Austen did, Lehmann writes about one family and its interactions, and touches on many important concerns of her time. Invitation to the Waltz uses to some degree the slice of life technique (used by Katherine Mansfield in "Bliss", "A Dill Pickle", and "The Garden Party") describing a few typical hours in her characters' lives and focusing on some small but significant events that both captures the meaning of the novel and clarifies the character of her protagonist.

Written in the third person, with occasional shifts into the first person, it is Olivia's viewpoint which controls the narrative and is at its centre. She is the central consciousness. In keeping with Olivia's governing point of view is the choice of persons who are shown from the inside (James, Kate, Miss Robinson). These characters are within Olivia's imaginative reach, whereas characters whom she does not know well or whose experience is alien to her are presented as Olivia sees them only (Uncle Oswald and certain people at the dance). Lehmann uses Olivia to illustrate the difficulty of expressing genuine states of feeling.

While the story is slight, segments of the two days in Olivia's life, Lehmann makes up for any slightness in story with astute detail, and excellent use of fragments that evoke a transitory moment in time. The book leaves an impression of English

society caught at a particular historical moment, at the turning-point of cultural consciousness that characterized the years after the First World War.

It is a story of the awkwardness and nervousness of adolescent experience, but also the thrill of being just on the brink of entering the adult world. Albéric Cahuet writes that Invitation to the Waltz is also the invitation to life. And that rarely, and with such surety and tenderness do we see analyzed in a book the moving awkwardness and agonies of adolescence.[28] It is also, like Dusty Answer, a story of an awakening--a suspended moment in one life, with all its attendant joy and wonder of the world. The ball presents Olivia with a series of partners, all of whom in some way contribute to her knowledge of the adult world or to the complexities of human nature and life in general. Even though Olivia does not realize her imagined goals of romance, she feels satisfied: "I've had a lot really, one way and another. What was it that, at the last, had made almost a richness? Curious fragments, odds and ends of looks, speeches"[29] She should feel satisfied, for she has lived her first dance completely, and lived it in the

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[28]Albéric Cahuet, "Rosamond Lehmann et les romancières britanniques," L'Illustration, 16 September 1933, p. 91. Translated from the following original French: "Invitation à la valse est aussi l'invitation à la vie.[...] Rarement avec autant de sûreté et de tendresse nous avons vu s'analyser dans un livre la gaucherie touchante et les affres de l'adolescente."

[29]Rosamond Lehmann, Invitation to the Waltz, (London: Virago, 1981) p. 298.

moment. But paradoxically it is her accepting nature that allows her to receive all this "richness". For most of the dance Olivia plays the role of observer; she watches the people at the dance. Her participation is based on her physical presence and on her extreme sensitivity. People use her because she seems so defenceless. The unhappy Peter can use her to vent his hostility against society rather than directly attack the people who upset him. Olivia receives not only hostility, however, but confidences, so that through her sympathetic openness, which draws out these confidences, she receives more from the dance than anyone else there. In contrast, her sister Kate's experience is more limited, even if closer to her imagined dreams. Kate's view is entirely limited by her focus on Tony Heriot, the boy she likes, and by romance. In the same way that we saw the entire world in Dusty Answer through Judith's eyes, so too does the dance become real for the reader through Olivia's experience. Olivia is receptive to everything and everybody. She is intensely sensitive, like most Lehmann-heroines, and reactive to what she encounters.

In Lehmann's fourth novel, The Weather in the Streets, she uses the most complicated means of narration thus far. The story is told through Olivia's point of view, but, as Lehmann switches from third person to first person even within the same sentence, the reader has the impression that Rosamond Lehmann and Olivia Curtis are interchangeable. For example,

[Olivia] stopped, feeling stubborn, choked by the usual

> struggle of conflicting impulses: to explain, to say nothing; to trust, to be suspicious; lightly to satisfy curiosity; to defy it with furious scorn and silence; to let nobody come too near me....[30]

Lehmann's treatment is effective and cohesive, where, when tried by other writers, as in this example from May Sinclair, from whom Lehmann may have taken the idea, the effect is confusing.[31]

> Mamma took her in her lap. She lowered her head to you, holding it straight and still, ready to pounce if you said the wrong thing.[32]

The Weather in the Streets is about Olivia Curtis' adulterous love affair with Rollo Spencer. Lehmann carefully chooses the narration to set the emotional tone of the novel. In parts I, III and IV the narrative technique used is that of the first person, to portray the thoughts of Olivia, and the third person to portray outside actions. Part II of the novel is written entirely in the first person, and is Olivia's recollection of the first phase of her love affair with Rollo. The first person brings about immediacy

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[30]Rosamond Lehmann, The Weather in the Streets (London: Collins, 1951) p. 18.

[31]In A Swan in the Evening Lehmann writes of her admiration for May Sinclair, "I knew of no other female writers, young or old; with the exception of May Sinclair whose novels excited me." (pp. 68-69) Hence it would seem highly possible that Sinclair might have influenced Lehmann in a number of ways. For example it is possible that Lehmann took the name "Olivia" from Mary Olivier. Sinclair's work on the whole, however, is not confusing; normally it is very effective, employing modernist techniques of imagism, symbolism and stream of consciousness. It is interesting to note that Lehmann's preference of woman writer was for such an innovative writer.

[32]May Sinclair, Mary Olivier: A Life (New York: MacMillan, 1919) p. 28.

which is further enhanced by use of short, incomplete sentences, not unlike stream of consciousness. For example part II begins:

> It was then the time began when there wasn't any time. The journey was in the dark, going on without end or beginning, without landmarks, bearings lost: asleep?... waking?... Time whirled, throwing up in paradoxical slow motion a sign, a scene, sharp, startling, lingering as a blow over the heart. (144)

And:

> But what have I got to go on about? I used to think then, I've got everything.... He's my lover.... It was enough.(157)

As shown above, while the first person can intensify a character's experience, the switching from first to third person serves to control the amount of reader interaction. Yet even while controlling reader interaction, Lehmann still suggests no correct or incorrect meaning to her text. When Lehmann writes, "Olivia sank back in her arm chair and turned her face"(42), we feel suddenly outside of Olivia's thought and emotions. On the other hand, we feel she is confiding in us, letting into her world and into the story when she writes:

> When I try to think over it, the times we were alone together weren't so very many. After a bit I began to think the walls and windows were full of eyes when he came back to Etty's.

Like the use of dialogue in Dusty Answer to bring immediacy into the novel, the use of elliptical sentences serves to do the same thing in The Weather in the Streets.

> Nibbling a biscuit.... Around me the furniture frozen into night silence, friendly, estranged.... Kate, Mother, Dad, the maids asleep upstairs, nurse too.... (136)

Here is an example of not only short, fragmented phrases, but also

interior monologue going on in the character's head. The following passage, when Olivia realizes she might be pregnant, represents the confused and fragmented thought patterns typical when thinking about stressful situations.

> Six, seven days late.... I'm worried. But it's happened once before, the first year Ivor and I were married; over a week then, I was beginning to be sure--but it was a false alarm[...] Nerves. Lying down like this I feel fine. Be all right tomorrow. Sleep. Thank God for lying down, a sleeper to myself[...] Queer, how a train journey throws up images, applies some stimulus to memory and desire.... The story unrolled from the beginning in a kind of rough sequence; like when a person's drowning, so they say... Ai, what a screech.... Into a tunnel, my ears thicken...out again. Nearer home, nearer Rollo. Tomorrow, come quick...don't come...Slowing down now.... Relax, go with the train's speed, give to its swaying....Breathe, breathe easily....Sleep....(pp. 228-229)

This level of consciousness also brings immediacy to the novel, the lack of a mediator between character and reader dissolving the distance and allowing the reader to feel one with, or at least close to, the characters. The images are set apart by ellipses as if to indicate that they appear almost simultaneously in Olivia's mind. Lehmann's ever-present examination of the interior and psychological states of her character helps to reveal Olivia's consciousness and objectiveness of the situation. Lehmann's split narrative helps also to reflect the dual facets of Olivia's identity--the self she must use in public which is also the self she is with Rollo, and her private self. It also points to the disparity between the goal of sexual equality and the actuality of existing conventional roles.

The combining of exterior and interior consciousness, and the juxtaposing of the comic and dramatic scenes are some of the techniques Lehmann uses to create the idea that Olivia is a character in the story, thoroughly immersed in what is going on, but also, as she herself is sometimes conscious, a "detached spectator". And it is often these moments when Olivia looks back at herself that are the most revealing. At the Spencers' dinner Olivia thinks to herself with ironic insight, "Now all was presented as in a film or play in which one is at one and the same time actor and infinitely detached spectator."(73-74)

Lehmann's treatment of stream of consciousness is, in most cases, different from Woolf's or Richardson's in that it is a perception of something slightly different from the omniscient narrator's point of view, who is able to observe each slight movement of the character's mind. The omniscient narrator is Olivia, but one has the sense that the narrator is able to separate herself from the thoughts of the character Olivia.

Most of the "action" in The Weather in the Streets is actually the main characters' subjective experience. Lehmann's choice of narrative technique--interior monologue, indirect third person and memory digressions--reflect this. However, because the plot of the novel is presented completely through the main character's point of view, as in Dusty Answer, it cannot be objective. We never know what Rollo is thinking for instance, only what Olivia tells us about him. It is always, "He seemed pleased and amused."(18) Is

this fair to the reader and the other characters? Can the reader make his or her own judgements based on the information received from Olivia, or Judith?

Yet Lehmann's aim may have not have been to delineate believable male characters. She, like other twentieth-century women writers, was dissatisfied with the characterizations of women in current fiction, and wanted to go beyond female stereotypes--to attempt to create whole selves in fiction that went past abstractions. Yet there were numerous problems associated with depicting these female characters. As Sydney Janet Kaplan explains,

> To explore any character's "stream of consciousness" involves certain assumptions. If an inner life is to be revealed, how should it be structured? What principles govern the course of that "stream?" [...] Are there really inherent differences between the consciousness of men and women?[33]

This last sentence is probably the most important. Lehmann's fiction at least shows that there are inherent differences between the consciousness of men and women, which will be discussed further in the section on gendered identities. One way Lehmann attempts to define this feminine consciousness is, not only by showing what the characters know concerning themselves, but also in revealing what they do not know about themselves, as illustrated in Olivia's thoughts. It is necessary to analyze thoughts, emphasis, and shifts in tone, as well as what is explicitly said.

In The Gipsy's Baby, Lehmann's book of short stories, the

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[33]Sydney Janet Kaplan, op.cit., pp. 2-3.

narrative technique is analogous to those already used in her novels. Yet, in most of her stories, the point of view belongs to a child. The narratives are not so much about them as through them. The stories come to life through the children's conversations, sensations and thoughts. As in The Ballad and the Source and The Echoing Grove it is the power of memory that governs the text. The memories turn into stories, and the stories unfold in Lehmann's unconscious way.

The story "When the Waters Came" opens like an oral, folkloric tale:

> Very long ago, during the first winter of the present war, it was still possible to preserve enough disbelief in the necessity for disaster to waver on with only a few minor additions and subtractions in the old way.[34]

This beginning suggests the existence of a legendary period, of passage through a recurrent historical moment. Lehmann equates the first winter of the Second War to natural catastrophic phenomena, the exceptional weather.

Lehmann's later novels are technically better than her earlier ones, and it is the narrative techniques in The Ballad and the Source and The Echoing Grove that show at her technical best. The focus on subjective experience is evident in all Lehmann's novels, but it is in these two that this focus reaches its epitome.

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[34]Rosamond Lehmann, "The Gipsy's Baby (London: Virago, 1982) p. 93.

In both The Ballad and the Source and The Echoing Grove Lehmann's emphasis is on the retelling of events by different narrators to expose the impossibility in interpretation and in defining objective truth.

The Ballad and the Source is Lehmann's most melodramatic novel. It is a study of the power of art, primarily through the use of narrative. The novel's protagonist is Mrs. Sibyl Anstey Herbert Jardine, whose narrative is the focus of the story. Rebecca Landon, who as a child was a neighbour to Mrs. Jardine, is the narrator of the novel, and through her we hear different versions of Mrs. Jardine's story from four other characters. Because of the child narrator, reviewers have been quick to point out the influence of James' What Maisie Knew on The Ballad and the Source. Lehmann imparts a large part of the story through a child's eye, suggesting that children perceive fundamental truths more readily than adults. She even goes as far as to name a child Maisie. Yet this may, however, be coincidental, for there are far more differences than there are similarities between Lehmann and James. Where Rebecca is the narrator of The Ballad and the Source, Masie is not in What Masie Knew. Rebecca is also far less aloof and more spontaneous than a Jamesian narrator.

In The Ballad and the Source Lehmann's concern is with forms of artistry, both literary and theatrical, and in it she questions both the power and the nature of narrative. In her review of the novel in The Nation Diana Trilling praised the novel declaring its

method

> ambitious in a way that is uncommon in contemporary fiction. Miss Lehmann divides her novel into several parts, in each of which the character and history of Mrs. Jardine are presented in a fresh light; and the development of the story is handled in long narrative dialogues between Rebecca and some other person in a position to know what happened, often Mrs. Jardine herself. By the use of such devices she rejects both the internality which is so popular with present-day novelists and the straightaway factuality of traditional fiction, in favour of the artificiality, if you will, of the "constructed" tale.[35]

The emphasis of this novel is entirely on narrative, to the extent that the events that occur are all either memories of incidences that happened much in the past, or the retelling of something that transpired outside the immediate structure of the story--such as Maisie's recounting of her mother's death to Rebecca.

Like previous Lehmann heroines, those in The Ballad in the Source are born storytellers. But Rebecca Landon with her modernist uncertainties is already different from her forebears, Judith and Olivia, revealing an acknowledgement on Lehmann's part of the social concerns of her time, outside the world of women's emotions.

The Ballad and the Source is modern not only in the way it treats narrative, but also because of the gender of the narrators. In conventional stories of young women's initiation into life, the initiator is often a male character, as in Elizabeth Bowen's The Death of the Heart and To the North. Emmeline's story in To The

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[35]"Fiction in Review," The Nation, 14 April 1945, vol. 160, pp. 423.

North is the familiar one of romantic initiation and loss of innocence at the hands of an unscrupulous man. Jean Rhys's heroines too are all perfect examples of this. The Ballad and the Source retains the drama and suspense, but alters the traditional formula as its main characters and narrators are all women.

At the centre of The Ballad and the Source is Mrs. Sibyl Jardine, an electrifying and magnetic older woman, who is both powerful and weak, and whose personality affects everyone around her. She is domineering and dogmatic, yet extremely capable of inspiring love. In the figure of Mrs. Jardine, Lehmann succeeds in creating a believable character. Mary Loeffelholz makes comparisons between Mrs. Jardine and Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse, suggesting Woolf's character may have had an influence on Lehmann's character.[36] She suggests both women enjoy directing other people's lives. But it would seem that Mrs. Jardine took this to much greater lengths than did Mrs. Ramsay, defining herself as an artist in "human material," obsessed by human possession. If there is similarity however, it is because we come to know Mrs. Ramsay primarily through Lily Briscoe's eyes, just as we come to know Mrs. Jardine through Rebecca and the narratives by other women told to Rebecca.

While examining the question of objective truth that these narratives raise, The Ballad and the Source is itself a moral

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[36]Mary Loeffelhotz, Experimental Lives: Women and Literature 1900-1945 (New York: Twayne, 1992) p. 89.

enquiry, while signally lacking in moral judgment. (See section VI.) The deceptive sense of morality that art generates in the text is scrutinized by means of each storyteller's narrative. Rebecca is charmed by Mrs. Jardine, asserting, "I could have listened all day to [her] for the sheer fascination of her style."[37] Mrs. Jardine is undeniably a charmer, but she is also capable of assuming many different personalities, pointing to the fine line between the power of illusion and reality, a recurrent theme with Lehmann. Lehmann's novels also exemplify a changed conception of the relation of art to reality, prevalent among the modern writers of her time.

In both Tilly's and Mrs. Jardine's narratives we see the power of art. It is the storyteller who determines history. In transforming the events, art supplants past realities. Here the power of art relies on the narrator's power to shape history by the retelling of events over and over so that this eventually becomes the remembered version, hence the only truth available.

Lehmann was not alone among writers of her period in looking at this, however it is her methods that are distinctive. Elizabeth Bowen's The Death of the Heart (1938), for example, is a story in content much like Dusty Answer. Sixteen-year-old Portia Quayne loses her innocence and idealism, like Judith Earle, and grows to accept the world as it is. Essentially a moral tale about the

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[37]Rosamond Lehmann, The Ballad and the Source (London: Collins, 1946) p. 27.

corruption of innocence, The Death of the Heart has elements analogous to The Ballad and the Source.[38] In both novels the narrative is far from simplistic and incorporates several viewpoints which evoke a multiplicity of responses to a single event or situation. But in The Ballad and the Source Lehmann uses the story of Sibyl Jardine's life, told over and each time differently, to Rebecca by different narrators to arrive at a conclusion, that does not judge. There are further similarities between Bowen's The House in Paris (1935) and Lehmann's novel, as both novels use precocious and sensitive children to view the world of adult mistakes, including, in both works, maternal desertion. The character of Mme. Fisher, like Mrs. Jardine, is an older woman, with a malevolent side, in love with a younger man (her daughter's fiancé) and very powerful in sculpting other people's lives.

Power, then, comes in many different guises. For one, there is the power of art, and one of the motifs of The Ballad and the Source. In this novel art takes on many forms. For example, Rebecca sees Tilly as "a medium reproducing skeleton dramas over and over again."(65) Rebecca's task is to get to the source, and unravel the truth from the confusing and often conflicting stories she is given. To do so she must learn herself how to manipulate art to gain the knowledge she seeks. As she listens to Tilly's dramas she

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[38]The innocence of Portia may parallel Bowen's own, for the character of Eddie is based upon Goronwy Rees with whom she had fallen in love only to lose him to Rosamond Lehmann.

is drawn in quickly realizing how to do this:

> I realised that my approach was faulty, and that I must be wily and devious until the tide flowed up again and overwhelmed such scruples as appeared to have arisen.
> "Can I thread your needle?" [Rebecca asks.](64)

And upon hearing Tilly tell of Mrs. Jardine's thwarted attempt to rescue Ianthe, Rebecca thinks to herself:

> I was abashed; but I felt now, in my moral fog, so hopelessly committed to the side against the angels, to my partnership in obliquity and obsession, that there was nothing for it but to continue stubbornly in my shamelessness. A complex of feelings about Ianthe knotted itself within me; indignation on her account that she should be denied her chance of conspiracy; jealousy that so stupendous, so unique a chance should be offered to another. How unfathomably I would have kept the secret! How I would have thriven on it! What I would have discovered about truth, to strengthen and keep me straight in my crookedness!(90)

If Tilly is "a medium" so too are Mrs. Jardine and Maisie. In Maisie's memory her mother remains exactly as she is in the portrait Maisie shows to Rebecca. Not until the end will she see her mother for the disturbed person that she is, lacking in any true maternal feeling. Maisie likewise confuses reality with image, her memory as selective as Mrs. Jardine's or Tilly's.

In their different ways both Tilly and Mrs. Jardine are masters in their trade, the art of storytelling. Comparing the two Rebecca says to Gil:

> We had an old sewing maid who used to tell me stories too--real ones, about my grandmother, and the old days. She acted them, and went on for hours, and I simply adored them. But Mrs. Jardine's were different. It was... oh! like hearing something <u>so true</u> it made everything else I knew--or that I'd been taught--seem like--boring feeble pretences.(245)

From the opening pages the reader realizes the power of Mrs. Jardine's narrative, as do the Landon girls. Of her Rebecca says:

> She looked at us attentively, and said in the brusque electrifying way we were to know so well: "I have never seen my grandchildren." We were dumb, shocked by the impact of what we recognised to be an important confidence.[...] What she had said, it was clear that she had said deliberately. (21)

It would seem the gift of storytelling is something inherited, especially in women, and passed down over the generations, for even Maisie, who dislikes her grandmother, uses the dramatic suspense that so resembles the monologues of Tilly and Mrs. Jardine as she tells Rebecca of the final events at the weir.

The three main storytellers, not surprisingly, are women. Tilly is so adept at extracting every morsel of drama from her story for Rebecca's benefit that her versions verge on the melodramatic. Likewise, Mrs. Jardine's theatrical touches seem to Rebecca as if the woman was "presenting a part she had rehearsed a hundred times."(114) And so the reader is left to wonder after each different story, how much is calculated drama and how much is truth.

When thinking about Mrs. Jardine Rebecca imagines her as "an Enchantress Queen in an antique ballad of revenge."(242) Her character is so powerful that even as an adult Rebecca still remembers her "like a legend" and a "Mythical Queen."[39] Through her

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[39]Rosamond Lehmann, A Sea-Grape Tree (London: Virago, 1982) p.42.

narrative Mrs. Jardine has succeeded in creating a drama and recreating herself as a work of art, an Enchantress Queen. We should ask, does the power lie in Mrs. Jardine's narrative or merely in her susceptible and impressionable recipient, allowed into the adult world for the first time? The answer is both, since the reader can see the power behind Mrs. Jardine's theatrical ballad, but the drama is then filtered through Rebecca's young mind. As she confesses to Gil,

> It was a treat for me, listening. Nobody had ever talked to me like that before.... Or ever has since. Of course it made me feel very important, hearing it. It was mostly things people would think children oughtn't to hear.(244)

But Rebecca is also aware of Mrs. Jardine's artifice: "I was aware through all my being of her plan, her timing."(103)

In A Note in Music Ralph Seddon, in thinking about two lovers who watch their reflection in a pool of water, muses to himself: "This might be the line to pursue: to see one reality and turn it inside out again and again, making of one many, and all conflicting; and ending with a question mark...."(153) This is precisely what Lehmann does with Mrs. Jardine. The reader views Mrs. Jardine from various angles; from her own direct story told to, and retold by, Rebecca, and from the points of view of Tilly, Maisie, Auntie Mack and Gil. In Gil's words Mrs. Jardine got back

> immeasurable reflections of herself. It's not deliberate, so it's pointless to moralise about it: it's some property of her nature--some principle, like yeast. She throws out all she has --her beauty, her gifts, her power over people--and objects-- and events; and it works. Each time she tries it out, it works like magic. Up come all these disturbing, magnetized self-

images.(241)

Interestingly, Mrs. Jardine earlier in the novel has characterized Ianthe[40] in similar terms. She tells Rebecca that her daughter was one who

> had built herself a room of mirrors[...] She looked into these mirrors and saw the whole of creation as images of herself thrown back at her[...] When people are afraid they dare not look outward for fear of getting too much hurt. They shut themselves up and look only at pictures of themselves, because these they can adapt and manipulate to their needs without interference, or wounding shocks. [...] So they look in the mirrors and see what flatters and reassures them;(123)

And finally in A Sea-Grape Tree Mrs. Jardine's presence forces adult Rebecca to start "to spin this way, that way, backwards through a Hall of Mirrors, chasing elusive identities."(76)

In some ways The Ballad and the Source can be seen as a forerunner to works such as Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook (1962). Lessing's work is more advanced and complex, but still addresses the same issues with which Lehmann was grappling: the struggle between truth and lies, reality and fiction, fidelity and betrayal and male and female. Lessing uses each different notebook to present a different view of "reality" in a similar way that Lehmann uses different characters' narratives. Both Lehmann and Lessing were showing the impossibility of judgment and truth. "The

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[40]It should be noted that, like the title A Note in Music, the name for Ianthe may also have found its inspiration from Walter Savage Landor. The Ianthe to whom Byron dedicated his Childe Harold was Lady Charlotte Harley. He borrowed it from Walter Savage Landor, who had etherealized the middle name of his early sweetheart, Sophia Jane Swift.

Blue Notebook" tries to be a diary, but Anna Wulf is unable to record experience truthfully within the limits of language, and is "pained at the thinning of language against the density of our experience". Out of Anna's chaos is created the Golden Notebook, the central point, the "essence" which says implicitly and explicitly that we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalize. Rebecca is no Anna, but she does realize by the end of the novel that she cannot rely on one individual interpretation of events. Just as in The Ballad and the Source where one narrative will contradict another, so too in Lessing's work do events from the Notebooks coincide with and contradict events in "Free Women." Anna's breakdown is reflected in the breakdown of boundaries between one Notebook and another, one fiction and another. Lessing's heroines are inclined to fall apart completely before they are able to put themselves back together--perhaps on the Marxist model that revolution must precede utopia. Lehmann's heroines come close to breakdown (Olivia at the time of the abortion in The Weather in the Streets, Rebecca in A Sea-Grape Tree), but pull themselves out of it through an inner strength, art, or something altogether different. Both Lessing's and Lehmann's heroines are blind in their romantic delusions, but Lessing's, like Rhys's seem deprived of any use of their wills.[41]

However, where The Golden Notebook was one of the most

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[41]Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook (New York, Harper Perennial, 1990).

important novels at the time for the subject of women's liberation, The Ballad and the Source seemed like a step backwards for Lehmann. The primary emphasis of Lehmann's fifth novel was that of narrative.

Where The Ballad and the Source is concerned with the dramatization of storytelling, The Echoing Grove presents a more realistic picture that emphasizes the psychological nature of human emotion. And where The Ballad and the Source is a study of character, The Echoing Grove is a study of structure. The Echoing Grove uses some of the aspects of multiple consciousness which Virginia Woolf used in Mrs. Dalloway, and it furthers the interest in a complex narrative technique introduced in The Ballad and the Source by way of each character's recounting of the same event, providing the reader, in each successive narrative, with a different view of what actually happened. The novel is narrated unchronologically in both first and third person, creating a sense of confusion[42] that pervades throughout.

The continually shifting narrative perspective is a device that reinforces the sense of confusion, and creates difficulty in establishing a single interpretation of the events. There is little plot in The Echoing Grove, the focus being on each character's rendition and reworking of the events, often in the form of unspoken soliloquies, in attempt to come to some inner peace for

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[42]Note: The novel effectively creates a sense of confusion without actually being confusing.

him or herself. The action does not extend outward, but rather inward in intense examination of the effects of adultery on all people involved, and primarily on the protagonists, Rickie Masters, his wife Madeleine and her sister, Rickie's lover, Dinah Sandhurst. In this novel as Judy Simons notes, "there is no filter, no child such as Rebecca Landon, through whose eyes adult passion can be mediated."[43] Walter Allen describes the novel as "a suffocatingly claustrophobic work in which never for a moment are we allowed the least relief from the masochistic self-torture suffered by the principal characters."[44] And after The Echoing Grove was published, John Lehmann wrote to his sister

> It's terrific; and terrible; because such writing could only come out of the most terrible suffering. It is one of the most unmitigatedly painful books I have ever read: the almost total absence of that enveloping aura of the poetry of natural beauty which I have always loved so much in your writing, makes it seem like an inferno.[45]

It is true that The Echoing Grove was written in Lehmann's mature life, when she had suffered greatly, particularly in love.

The Echoing Grove is stylistically the most complex of Lehmann's novels, and helped to reveal her sense of the "frightful

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[43]Judy Simons, op.cit., p. 118.

[44]Walter Allen, Tradition and Dream (London: Phoenix House, 1954) p. 196.

[45]Letter from John Lehmann to Rosamond Lehmann, 10 April 1953, King's College, Cambridge.

complexity of existence".[46] This sense of the complexity of existence finds expression on several levels.

The technique described previously, where the split narrative depicts the tension existing between Olivia's dual lives, is the same technique that provides the inspiration for The Echoing Grove. In this novel the dual narrative reconstructs the past and the perceptions of the three main characters form the basis for each of its separate sections. The shift of consciousness among Rickie, Madeleine and Dinah is used as a psychological device to expose their anxieties and obsessions, and those in general that make up personal relationships.

The novel's construction is circular, beginning with the sisters' reunion, backtracking thirty years in time, and ending where it began, "centuries or a moment of time ago."(165) Often in The Echoing Grove "past, present, future [merge] for a moment".(229) This circular time sequence adds to the sense of "echoing" and claustrophobia. It also creates the image of an inescapable, personal hell, a "huis-clos" where hell is other people. Several times during the novel Rickie expresses similar sentiments. At one point he yearns "to go off alone somewhere for ever and ever..."[47] At another point he "was tempted to wish that

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[46]Letter from Rosamond Lehmann to Somerset Maugham discussing The Echoing Grove. (undated) King's College, Cambridge.

[47]Rosamond Lehmann, The Echoing Grove (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958) p. 106.

he was fitted to become a monk."(119)

The drawing room setting that appears so often in The Echoing Grove is another similarity to Sartre's play. Similarly, there is a kind of existential inevitability to all that occurs, as if the characters make decisions within a larger, governing force. In the same way they have no control over the falling bombs, neither does it seem they have any real control over their own lives.

When speaking about The Golden Notebook Lessing remarked that the point is "the relation of its parts to each other."[48] This is equally true of The Echoing Grove. Both novels, while showing the main characters' perceptions to be disorganized, are contained within a structured form. Lessing also stated, "I understood that the shape of this book should be enclosed and claustrophobic--so narcissistic that the subject matter must break through the form." This remark might as easily be discussing The Echoing Grove.

The two, however, differ in the level of consciousness the reader is able to observe in the characters. In the Notebooks, especially the blue one, Anna expresses her own view. But this is Anna writing about her consciousness, not her consciousness itself. Therefore the Notebooks present her memory of her perceptions. Whereas in The Echoing Grove the partial use of an omniscient narrator to describe what is going on in the characters' minds, gives a sharper penetration of consciousness. Lehmann can express

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[48]Doris Lessing, Counterpoint, ed. Ray Newquist (London: George All, 1965) p. 418.

her characters' perceptions immediately, as they occur in time, and not through memory.

The title of the novel is taken from Blake's poem "My Spectre around me night and day" and reflects the structure of the book. As Elizabeth Bowen points out,

> The novel is well-named. More than one of the characters is aware of love's claustrophobia; and indeed we stand with them in a shaded place in which voices are multiplied, sometimes mocked, by their own echoes, or by echoes of others.[49]

As a mediation on the reverberations of the three main characters' interrelationships, it is similar and at the same time far removed from Dusty Answer and Lehmann's earlier works in its portrayal of love. Compared with the romantic love in Dusty Answer, The Echoing Grove examines rather the obsessive and torturous nature of passion and its disastrous consequences on the lives of those involved. In this novel love is not idealized. Lehmann vividly shows the power love has to consume people, and itself. The "grove" in the poem refers to human passion: "Let us agree to give up love,/And root up the Infernal Grove". The "echoing" of the grove of love is each character's memory of the events, and what carries the novel. But where Blake's next two lines run: "Then shall we return and see/The worlds of happy Eternity," Rickie and Dinah do not agree to give up love, neither do they find happy eternity. The two are parted against their will by Rickie's sudden illness, at the moment when

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[49]Elizabeth Bowen, "The Modern Novel and the Theme of Love," Review of The Echoing Grove, New Republic, 11 May 1953, p. 19.

they are to go off together, suggesting, as in The Ballad and the Source, the predetermined course of events. It leaves Rickie, however, with the feeling that life is composed of frustration and despair. Or as Georgie perceptively says, remembering something Rickie told her,

> and then you said, was the human condition always frustration then? And I said yes, but could be like The Three Sisters or that story The Dead - the kind that starts echoes afterwards, backwards and forwards for ever wherever you strike it--one echo picking up another till the whole thing sounds out like a fulfillment...(217)

The literary references here are of interest in that they are both stories of unfulfillment and lost hope.

In The Waves (1931), Woolf begins each new section with a description of the sun as it travels through the sky to nightfall. The transition from dawn to dusk provides a kind of stage lighting, indicating the emotional colour of the scene to come.

In a similar way, The Echoing Grove is divided into sections, defined by the sun or its lack: "Afternoon", "Morning", "Nightfall", "Midnight" and "The Early Hours," the first and last of which, set in the present, frame the central three. Each section corresponds to a time when Dinah and Madeleine are together. The two sisters meet shortly after Rickie's death, and again a few years after the end of the Second World War. From this present time the novel moves back in time, by way of the protagonists' (as well as Mrs. Burkett's) narratives, to the crucial part, the long, psychologically exhausting and destructive affair between Dinah and

Rickie during the 1930s and 40s. The omniscient narrator at the beginning is succeeded by a series of interior monologues, and as in other works by Lehmann, the act of memory becomes central as each character remembers, reconstructing the events, the past. Sometimes it is a memory of a memory that is remembered. The importance of an event or experience is encapsulated in concrete forms, and their connections with each other are not based on sequential time. Because of its experiments with time dimension and shifts in narrative perspective, The Echoing Grove can be considered modernist in technique.

In The Echoing Grove the point of view is threefold, and a departure from Lehmann's past works for two reasons. Lehmann's sympathies usually lie with the unconventional character and it is from her point of view that the story is told. In The Weather in the Streets, for example, the reader sides with Olivia, the mistress, and never is any indication given of what Nicola, Rollo's wife, thinks. In The Echoing Grove Lehmann delivers an unbiased and objective view formed from the points of view of the three main characters, husband, wife and mistress alike. This is also the first text in which Lehmann tries to develop a man's point of view. Lehmann's characterization of Rickie is the most complex and fully drawn of any of the male characters she had attempted. Compared with Rollo's character Rickie is more developed, although he nevertheless remains less realized or materialized, and hence believable, than the two sisters. Of Rickie, Duff Cooper wrote, "I

liked him better than any of the girls. It is surely very rare for an authoress to draw a male character so admirable."[50] Although perhaps he was sympathetic toward Rickie because, like Rickie, he too suffered ulcer troubles.

Lehmann does in The Echoing Grove what Jean Rhys does in After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie. Rhys's novel deals with the woman long after youthful hopefulness and trust have vanished. The heroine, Julia Martin, is older, harder, more ravaged by the world than, for example, Anna Morgan of Voyage in the Dark, just as Dinah is compared to Olivia. Both After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie and The Echoing Grove portray women fighting to delay their arrival at the nadir of their existence. The characters of Mr. Horsfield and Rickie respectively present a more detailed and complicated analysis of male attitudes toward the female. In Rhys's novel the preliminary scenes are rendered from Horsfield's point of view, just as The Echoing Grove presents certain sections from Rickie's perspective. In both novels the handling of point of view deepens the reader's sense of what might otherwise be seen as a prosaic, or melodramatic, relationship between male and female characters. The shift between the two consciousnesses is effective in After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie and The Echoing Grove as it was not in Quartet or The Weather in the Streets, where Heidler and Rollo were not convincing as characters because the narrators could not free themselves

[50]Letter from Lord Duff Cooper to Lady Diana Cooper, 1953, King's College, Cambridge.

respectively from Marya's or Olivia's point of view. The shifting point of view in The Echoing Grove not only accommodates the unfolding of the intertwined relationships, but also inaugurates and sustains the entire dramatic situation.

Unlike Rhys, however, Lehmann appears to have no preferences for one character over any other, but instead merely paints a depressing yet realistic picture of three individuals and their entangled lives. Many reviewers, however, found Dinah's character to be completely disagreeable, which seems contrary to what Lehmann intended. Diana LeStourgeon is particularly harsh on Dinah stating that, "Dinah, almost from first to last, is a thoroughly disagreeable person" suggesting that the term "soulful bitch" is an apt description of her.[51] She also states that "Mrs. Burkett is indistinguishable from Mrs. Curtis of The Weather in the Streets" and that "they could change places with no damage at all to either book",(119) which is untrue and fails to see completely the roles that these minor characters and mother figures, especially Mrs. Burkett, play in each novel.

Although written two and a half decades later, The Echoing Grove is in ways similar to To the Lighthouse (1927), especially in the integration of its separate parts. Its use of clock time to counterpoint psychological time is reminiscent of techniques used by Virginia Woolf. Likewise it is similar to Bowen's The House in

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[51]Diana LeStourgeon, op.cit., pp. 113-14.

Paris and Friends and Relations (1931) in that it contains sections with a significant passage of time between past and present. In the second part of The House in Paris the novel returns through time, not as flashback but as disembodied memory, to the year in which Karen and Ray, the two lovers and the main characters, had their affair. In The Echoing Grove this disembodied remembering occurs frequently. In one example a minor character, Tim, with whom Madeleine dances, recalls a scene in his mind from his and Madeleine's youth:

> He permitted his memory to dwell upon a romantic passage in a Sussex garden the deuce of a long time ago. He'd been a callow cub then, experimenting with girls and demi-girls and other sorts, considerably more business-like than idealistic; but he'd never quite forgotten how sweet she'd been at eighteen years old, the prettiest girl in the room,... you never knew where you were with her...one kiss in the dark, gauche, inexpert, with no sequel; he'd found out what he wanted to know. She was hot stuff all right--(69)

At the same moment Madeleine is remembering her version of the same evening:

> [She] had often wondered if he remembered that never since mentioned episode in the Vances' garden the night of Sylvia's coming-out dance. Almost her first house party and her frock split at the waist. Fairy lights in the trees, a bush of syringa they'd buried their faces in, his anticipated but in the event unbargained-for embrace which, shaken in her self-respect, she had discussed next morning in her bedroom with a girl friend... "I can only say I hope I'll never be kissed like that again." "You don't think you encouraged him?" "Certainly not." "And you didn't sort of enjoy it?" "No, not at all." Hysterical gales of giggling.... (69-70)

In another example in the beginning pages of the novel, Dinah lies awake in what was once Rickie's dressing-room, now the spare room, filled with mementos from Madeleine's children. Staring at

Clarissa's photograph of Rickie on a bedside table induces Dinah to remember the still born child she bore with Rickie.

> "Oh!... It's not breathing." Puzzled, matter-of-fact. Not a tactful thing to remark in that tone of voice to a woman just through labour. Before that, with my eyes fast shut, I'd seen her, Corrigan, pick it up out of the tumbled bed. "It's a boy." Just what I'd expected to have... I felt my huge smile flood through me,... A boy. Under my shut eyes I listened, peacefully waiting for what was only to be expected--the sound of newborn crying. I wasn't worried by the silence... "It's dead I think." Flat statement. (35)

As the above illustrates, flashbacks occur continually throughout the novel so

that the memories become the story.

In the world of the novel the year of five years ago is an envelope of existence, separate from the present. In The House in Paris the present returns in the third part with the same phrase that has ended the first part: "Your mother is not coming; she cannot come."[52] Likewise in The Echoing Grove the present returns periodically, most notably at the start of each section, with the exception of the section titled "Midnight"—which leaves the reader with a feeling of inconsistency. Yet the strength of the novel lies in Lehmann's attention to shifting nuance and the subtleties of experience.

The Swan in the Evening, a kind of memoir, was Lehmann's next work after The Echoing Grove and her first book after her daughter Sally's death. Subtitled "Fragments of an Inner Life" it was to be

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[52]Elizabeth Bowen, The House in Paris (New York: Knopf, 1936) pp. 62 & 213.

for Lehmann her spiritual autobiography. Divided into four sections, it is a departure from her earlier works in terms of its narrative style. As the subtitle indicates Lehmann incorporates only fragments from her life, often in the form of anecdotes from her beloved childhood. She begins the book with selected memories of growing up, particularly those that made a lasting impression on her. She then jumps to the moment of Sally's death and her unexpected, yet totally accepted turn toward physic experience and belief in life beyond death. The last section takes the form of a letter written to her granddaughter Anna, and possibly wondering critics, explaining the book and its divergence from her previous works. Reviewing The Swan in the Evening V. S. Pritchett wrote:

> The Swan in the Evening embarrasses because it puts the reader in the position of being an intruder on a terrible private grief. For Miss Lehmann herself there is the difficulty of conveying to those of us who are generally hostile to the belief that it is possible to have comforting contact with the dead, that she has had this experience. This makes her aggressive towards ourselves and fragmentary and allusive about what happened... [53]

While The Swan in the Evening is a definite departure from her earlier realistic novels, the strong Lehmann themes of death and loss remain the same, allowing the work a kind of cohesion it might otherwise lack. There is cohesion in another way, too. In starting the text with her own memories, then moving to her daughter, and then to her granddaughter, Lehmann reveals another recurrent theme

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[53]V. S. Pritchett, Review of The Swan in the Evening, New Statesman, 1967.

in her writing, and one witnessed in The Ballad and the Source: the essential relationship between generations of women in a family.

In The Swan in the Evening, and her final novel, A Sea-Grape Tree, Lehmann experiments with artistic form in a search for meaning and a means of professing her new-found beliefs. The two works are departures from earlier ones for as Judy Simons explains,

> All Rosamond Lehmann's major novels stress the importance of memory, and project an abiding consciousness of historical process, but in The Swan in the Evening and A Sea-Grape Tree the past and future merge to inform the significance of the present moment with an explicitly metaphysical bias.[54]

This shift is attributable to Lehmann's work and friendships with Wellesley Tudor Pole, Cynthia Hill Sandys and others, after the death of her daughter. Yet predating Sally's death, hints of Lehmann's interest in mysticism are found in letters where she asks questions about telepathic experiences of others.[55] There is also a short scene in The Echoing Grove where Dinah thinks she communicates with Rickie, whom she has not seen in years, just before he dies.

A Sea-Grape Tree brings together themes from both The Ballad and the Source and The Swan in the Evening, one of which is mysticism. Like The Ballad and the Source, it opens with Rebecca Landon being told a series of stories about the past. It is the

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[54]Judy Simons, op.cit., p. 131.

[55]A number of letters from 1951-53 exist in her correspondence at King's College, Cambridge.

sequel to The Ballad and the Source, and like The Swan in the Evening it reflects Lehmann's interest in mysticism. Lehmann saw it as an experimental work, handling time and place in an original way.

The story is narrated in the third-person, and like the earlier novel, through Rebecca's eyes. In this novel Rebecca again meets Mrs. Jardine even though the latter has died. After The Ballad and the Source Lehmann still felt the spell of Mrs. Jardine, and felt she must find out more about the character. Even though Lehmann wrote A Sea-Grape Tree nearly fifty years after Woolf's To the Lighthouse, the two have similarities in the form of the tremendous presence and hold both Mrs. Jardine and Mrs. Ramsay continue to have even after their deaths. At the end of the final section in To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay has died, but unfinished threads from the first section are picked up once more: Lily returns to work on her painting of Mrs. Ramsay that she was unable to finish on the first visit. Mr. Ramsay takes the children across the bay to the lighthouse, fulfilling a promise to his son James made years before by Mrs. Ramsay herself. Thus both Lily and Mr. Ramsay make their peace with the ghost of Mrs. Ramsay. Like Lily, Rebecca, if she is to survive with Johnny, has to come to peace with the memory of Mrs. Jardine, whose spirit lingers over the island; she must close the story begun in her youth. Mrs. Jardine appears either in a dream or as a ghost to Rebecca, perhaps as a result of Lehmann's new interest in life beyond death. The vision

says to Rebecca: "surely they told you that life goes on - relentlessly one might say."(82)

There is also the character of Miss Stay who Lehmann described as the "presiding genius and advanced psychic"[56], and who reminds Rebecca of Auntie Mack also from The Ballad and the Source. Miss Stay, or Staycie, is said to be guided, "By Spirit. Entirely guided by Spirit. By her Voices. She's spoken through - when people come to her in trouble."(31)

A Sea-Grape Tree, like most of Lehmann novels, was essentially an unconscious and involuntary process, in which the author is almost as much a spectator as her reader, watching her characters emerge and develop, in an organic manner. Where Lehmann came close to approximating stream of consciousness in The Weather in the Streets, she achieved it in The Echoing Grove and A Sea-Grape Tree. In the following passage the protagonist, Rebecca, or Anonyma, is trying to calm herself, after being abandoned by her lover and having just arrived on the Caribbean island:

> ... observe surroundings observe Miss Stay she's made of clay dried clay and wire she wears a shingle cap pin silk net with strings tied beneath her scrawny chin why does she does she never take it off is it functional to tether a wig perhaps is it a wig such a curious colour or is it meant to add the final piquant touch??? I made one observation on the boat elderly people look a sad sight asleep puffing their lips out sagging so down in the mouth down and out done for LOST PROPERTY NO ONE WILL EVER CLAIM IT now stop that don't be like Bobby morbid think about lovely sleep sleep that knits up the ravelled sleep [sic] and forgetting forgetting think about

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[56]Rosamond Lehmann, Rosamond Lehmann's Album (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985) Postscript.

> children asleep - at home in their sleep drowned fathoms deep exposed and safe like fruit and flowers under glass think about water lilies on dark water now fold the lily thing of moss-feather cocooning birds' nest think of chestnuts cream-dappled golden-brown moulded firm into hard green caskets lined with whitest softest spun silk substance DELICIOUS SIGHT [...] (25-26)

The paragraph above is not unlike a passage from Ulysses, and very different from Lehmann's first novel. Thus, Lehmann's technical experiments, while not as striking as Woolf's or Richardson's, are nevertheless modern in approach. Her use of interior monologue in every novel, culminating with passages like the above, are Joycean in nature, as is the absence of an omniscient narrator in most of her works to tell us what "really" happened, forcing the reader to view the action through the consciousness of one or several of the characters. Yet paradoxically, through this very subjective vision an objective vision is born.

The Influence of War [57]

The Great War was largely responsible for some of the most innovative works of the twentieth century and some of the most drastic breaks with the past. The First World War is credited with giving birth to Modernism, Surrealism and Dadaism. Like Austen, who lived through both the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, and registered these enormous events only slightly in her novels, Lehmann lived through two world wars, but, with the exception of her stories, they are never the focus of any of her works. Yet it would be difficult for the wars not to have affected, even if indirectly, her writing.

This chapter will show that while Lehmann's narrative technique was influenced by the war, the influence was most likely from contemporaries, or near contemporaries, whose techniques were directly altered by the wars, and not from the war itself. Where the wars do play an integral part in Lehmann's work, however, is in the content and tone of her writing, and because of this her works

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[57]This study will not address all of Lehmann's predominant themes, as previous works have already done an excellent job at this. For a study of some of Lehmann's more interesting themes, including childhood and growing up, the past, dead babies, dead birds and water, see Gillian Tindall, op.cit.

should not be considered next to her nineteenth-century forerunners, but with the twentieth-century moderns.

Both the direct presence of war and the results of war, particularly the First World War, haunt all of Lehmann's novels. Lehmann's reference to and depiction of the war will help advance the argument that, while her novels may seem merely to offer a world of romantic fantasy, they are in fact deceptive and provide much more. Lehmann examines the wars, not syllogistically or hypothetically, but for the effects they produce upon the characters.

The First World War ushered in a new era, one that called for a new sensibility; Lehmann and her generation were part of that era and sensibility. Born during the first decade of the twentieth century, Lehmann's generation made its mark between the two World Wars, and identified itself in terms of the wars. They were the generation of "entre les deux guerres" and the contemporary political and economic situation permeated their consciousness. Thus because they were essentially defined by the two World Wars, it would be difficult for these writers to avoid mention of the wars in their writings. Yet, surprisingly, Lehmann has been criticized[58] as being narrow in scope and unconcerned with the political or social problems of her times. By analyzing her work and its subtle, but ubiquitous underlying theme of war--and often

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[58]See footnote number six.

as a direct consequence of the war, loss, isolation and feelings of impermanence--I hope to prove this untrue.

In 1917 Louis Mairet concluded, "Poetry is dead."[59] What he meant was that traditional poetry was dead. This was equally true of much of the prose that followed the war, evidenced in the fiction of Joyce, Woolf, Stein, Richardson and others. Traditional fiction was dead, or atleast it would be radically changed.[60] Lehmann's novels, while to a lesser degree, nevertheless reflect this change. They reflect the fact that she, like others (Rebecca West, Jean Rhys), was breaking away from her pre-war upbringing in her search for emotional fulfillment. Thus, unlike Mairet, these writers saw not the death of art, but the birth of a new aesthetic. Art became the only available correlative of the war, and not an art following previous rules, but an art that became an event or experience.

The years between the wars were Lehmann's most prolific. The Great War, and the social changes that accompanied it, plays a part in all Lehmann's works. She never underestimates the role of the First World War in shaping her generation, or century. As late as 1983 Lehmann wrote in an article that, as a young woman,

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[59]Louis Mairet, Diary entry 4 March 1917, Carnet d'un combattant (Paris: Cres, 1919) p. 291.

[60]While this dissertation discusses primarily British and Irish writers, I am aware that the "new" novel certainly appeared in American fiction: The Sun Also Rises and the early stories of Hemingway, as well as the work of Stein who, although she lived and wrote in France, was still an American.

> I had it lodged in my subconscious mind that the wonderful unknown young man whom I should have married had been killed in France, along with all the other wonderful young men; so that any other suitor - and quite a few uprose - would be a secondary substitute, a kind of simulacrum.[61]

It is true that Lehmann was of a romantic temperament. In The Swan in the Evening she admits "much of what I wrote dealt with romantic and sexual love seen from a subjective angle".(66) Yet, however "romantic," Lehmann spoke for the concerns of all women of her generation. Her concerns were both social and political, evident in the fact that war and class difference figure in every one of her works. Her works also continually examine the twentieth-century female psyche and the general malaise that afflicted the postwar generation. Yet her style in treating such concerns was subtle, and therefore easily overlooked by critics.

In her novels and stories Lehmann set the contemporary social consciousness of the war. For example her rendering of the permanent mental scars Julian bears from war is quite subtle. But nonetheless, Julian's affliction should be considered as seriously as those suffered by Clifford Chatterley or Jake Barnes. Likewise there is beautiful Charlie, Judith's favourite, who marches off to war and symbolically dies. Lehmann saw the paradox: the banal and tragic versus the Great War as an emblematic event. The years preceding the First World War became a Golden Age, which Dusty Answer so well epitomizes. Charlie's death also points to the

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[61]Gillian Tindall, op.cit., p. 32.

generational conflict of which so many soldiers were aware.[62] Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly", for example, shows a father who has sacrificed his son in the war, and does not even know how properly to mourn his death.[63]

Lehmann's generation perceived themselves in mythic terms as well as in political and sociological; they were symbol-makers. As Samuel Hynes points out, this propensity to symbol-making, to reading one's life as if one were reading allegory, to reading oneself into the fabric of literature, is the legacy of the vision of modernists: Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, T.S. Eliot, Marcel Proust, James Joyce and Ezra Pound. These poets and writers made a mythology of their generation and strove to create a poetry of immediate history that would mythologize, and so make coherent, the enormous disorder of the time.[64]

But Lehmann herself, although continually looking to the past, did not look so much at the mythic proportions of the war, but rather to its actualities. In Invitation to the Waltz, for instance, Olivia dances with Timmy, a soldier blinded by the war, and experiences a

moment's wild new conscious indignation and revolt, thinking

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[62]See, for example, Wilfred Owen's "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young"(1917).

[63]Katherine Mansfield, The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield (New York, Ecco, 1983) pp. 600-601.

[64]Samuel Hynes, The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics of the 1930s (New York: Viking, 1972) pp. 143-154.

> for the first time: This was war -- never, never to be forgiven or forgotten, for his sake.(160)

The actuality was "a cloud on early adolescence, weighing not too darkly, long lifted".(159)

In Lehmann's works the war serves to reinforce the sense of a changing world or a loss of innocence. For example, after the First World War and Charlie's death, Judith's world is never the same again. Likewise, when boys like Malcolm Thomson, Maisie's brother in The Ballad and the Source, are killed off by the hundreds and thousands, a feeling of senselessness is produced. For Rebecca this moral confusion seems to characterize her generation.

In Dusty Answer Lehmann makes the atrocity of the war evident, without ever actually portraying it, by contrasting Judith's youthful, innocent, and as yet not cynical point of view with the outside events, particularly the war. In this way Lehmann illustrates Judith's development from the lonely, imaginative child of the beginning to the independent and wiser young woman she is by the end.

The Chekhovian cherry-tree, symbolic of Judith's idyllic past before the forces of the adult world threatened her childhood existence, is in the final page cut down, taking with it the last of her illusions. In the same way that Chekhov's play is a study of the changing way of life in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, Dusty Answer can be read as a commentary on the Edwardian generation, the effects of the First World War on this generation

and a vivid depiction of what the change meant to the people involved.

In many ways Dusty Answer is very much a novel shaped by the war with, like all of Lehmann's works, its insistence on the inevitability, and eventually acceptance, of loss throughout life. It is possible that Lehmann's themes of love and loss, and love and its impermanence have their roots in the very uncertain historical period she lived through. Images of loss in the beginning of Dusty Answer prophesy greater losses to come. Foreshadowing Mariella's loss of her husband Charlie, her son Peter, and the real love of her life, Julian, is the image of her beloved great Dane's death:

> She had a great dane and she went about alone with him for choice, her arm round his neck. One day he was sick and started groaning, and his stomach swelled and he went into the thickest part of the laurel bushes and died of poison in half an hour. Mariella came from a French lesson in time to receive his dying look. She thought he reproached her, and her head, fainting in anguish, fell over his, and she said to him: 'It wasn't my fault.' She lay beside him and would not move. The gardener buried him in the evening and she lay on the grave, pale, extinguished and silent. When Judith went home to supper she was still lying there. Nobody saw her cry, and no one ever heard her speak of him again.(6)

The passage points to the fact that it is no more "her fault" that the dog died than it is her fault that she was young and the war broke out and she was coerced into marrying Charlie and having his son, a child she never should have had. It is not her fault that she loves Julian and he cannot love her any more than Roddy can really love Judith.

Just before the end of the First World War Judith looks out

her window and thoughts of "war and rumours of war receded, dwindling into a little shadow beyond the edge of the enchanted world".(47) But then she goes next door and learns that Charlie has been killed.

After Charlie's death Judith wonders:

> Had he really lived? Forget him, forget him. He was only a shadow any way, a romantic illusion, a beautiful plaything of the imagination: nothing of importance.(49)

And when she looks out her window this time, instead of the budding spring beauty, she sees that

> all the colours were drained away; only the white spring flowers in the border shone up with a glimmer as of phosphorus, and the budding tree-tops were picked out, line by cold line, in a thin and silvery wash of light.(53)

The above quotation smacks of the Great War and shows Lehmann's artistic perception, revealing her to be a modernist. It is the sort of description that appears in hundreds of memoirs, especially "phosphorous", read "poison gas."

Thus, the war enters the narrative in subtle ways, as it does through Judith's unconscious dream world. With Julian and Charlie both away at the front she dreams of them:

> Then, nourished afresh on new hopes, desires, and terrors, the children next door came back night after night in dreams. Julian in uniform came suddenly into the library. He said:
> 'I've come to say good-bye.'
> 'Goodbye? Are you going back to the front?'
> 'Yes. In a minute. Can't you hear my train?'
> She listened and heard the train-whistle.
> 'Charlie's going too--He'll be here in a minute. Goodbye Judith.'(41)

When Charlie appears in the dream he is disguised.

> All at once she saw him in the darkness outside. He was not in uniform, but in grey flannel shorts and a white shirt open at the neck,--the clothes of his childhood. He trailed himself haltingly, as if his feet hurt him.
> 'Sh!' said Julian in her ear. 'He's disguised himself.'
> 'Ah, then he won't get killed....'
> 'No.'
> She caught sight of his face. It was a terrible disguise,--the shrivelled, yellow mask of an ancient cretin. He looked at her vacantly, and she thought with a pang: 'Ah! I must pretend I don't know him.'
> He passed out of sight with his queer clothes and his limp and his changed face,--all careful paraphernalia of his travesty. Looking at him, she was seized with sudden horror. There was something wrong: they would see through it.
> She tried to reach him, to warn him; but she was voiceless and he had disappeared.(42)

Similar images of death foreshadow Judith's loss of Roddy and of her innocence. As a child she discovers a dead rabbit that one of the Fyfes had accidently killed with a stone. It is Roddy who digs a grave and gives the rabbit a proper burial to ease Judith's and perhaps his own pain.(23-25) Later another dead rabbit appears in the story, this time purposely shot by Martin, its death foreshadowing Martin's own death.(275-77) Contrast and memory are again effectively used as Martin stoops to examine the rabbit and Judith recalls the previous rabbit of years ago thinking, "Who was it devilish enough to prepare these deliberate traps for memory, these malicious repetitions and agonizing contrasts?"(275)

In flashbacks Lehmann portrays an almost too idyllic picture of Judith's early childhood with the children next door. The reader must wonder if it was this way, or if it is only the distortion of Judith's memory now contrasted with the aftermath of war and the

adult world.

This is one of the crucial questions in Great War literature: Was the world after 1914 truly so different? Lehmann believes that it was. Other writers took this view as well. Robert Graves' Goodbye To All That addresses "all that" that died on the western front. In Tender is the Night Dick Diver says at Beaumont Hamel, "All my beautiful lovely safe world blew itself up here with a great gust of high explosive love."[65] Like Fitzgerald, Lehmann shows in her novels what the war did to love.

Part two of Dusty Answer ends with the death of Judith's father, as if it takes the ending of one person, either symbolically or literally, to initiate change and beginning. This idea is also expressed in The Weather in the Streets, The Echoing Grove and A Sea-Grape Tree. Judith realizes that love and enchantment are contingent on mortality. "Then death, lovely death, lay at the heart of enchantment. It was the core of the mystery and beauty."(120) With this "shin ing vision" comes a moment when Judith realizes that some other meaning lies beyond human existence:

> Tomorrow she would not know it, but to-night no knowledge was surer. And he whom they were to mourn was--in one minute she would know where he was,--one minute.
> She leaned out of the window.
> Now! Now!
> But the cherry-tree was nothing but a small flowering cherry-tree. Before her straining eyes it had veiled itself and

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[65]F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender is the Night (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934) p. 75.

withheld the sign.(120)

This "moment of revelation" to reveal a deeper meaning will be used by Lehmann throughout her novels. (See below.) It also in an uncanny way portends Lehmann's interest, after her daughter died, in mysticism and life after death.

Dusty Answer was published only two years after Mrs. Dalloway, and yet the two are very different. Mrs. Dalloway, however, contains many of these moments of revelation so similar to Lehmann's. Her character Septimus Smith's psychotic thoughts are a direct result of the First World War. From the start Mrs. Dalloway documents the different male and female reactions to the war, as it examines the ways in which women survive the catastrophe while men, like Septimus, are killed by it, even after it is over. As if foreshadowing Clarissa's survival and Septimus's suicide, Woolf has Clarissa early in the day of her party think of "Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed"[66], and, then, of "old Uncle William" who "turned on his bed one morning in the middle of the War" and dying, said, "I have had enough."(15) Woolf also seems at least intermittently to be responding to aspects of Eliot's The Waste Land.

The epiphany is of course evident in Joyce, but also in other writers of the period such as Katherine Mansfield. In Mansfield's

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[66]Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925) p. 5.

story "Bliss", the pear tree takes on a significance like Lehmann's cherry tree. Both Bertha in "Bliss" and Judith in Dusty Answer look out the windows and long for some kind of sign from the trees. The trees remain symbolic in both story and novel, but ultimately do not offer any insight to what is already known.[67]

Lehmann's second novel, A Note in Music, is very much an inter-war novel in tone, for the dreary setting of northern England evokes a Waste Land feeling. If Lehmann's own childhood paralleled Dusty Answer, so did her life with Leslie Runciman have resemblances to A Note in Music. When Lehmann married Runciman after finishing Girton, and moved to Newcastle, she wasn't in love with him, but everyone found the match most suitable. She found her surroundings in Northumberland cold and depressing and as an escape started writing Dusty Answer. There is also lilac imagery in the novel, evocative of Eliot's poem.[68] But Lehmann differs from Eliot in that her lilacs symbolize not only memory and desire, but also hope.

Her characters are products of the historical period, whereby the political and social problems of the time are implicitly reflected in their upheaval. The war plays a large role in Norah

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[67]Katherine Mansfield, The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield (New York: Ecco, 1983).

[68]April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

MacKay's life, for it killed Jimmy, her one true love. Norah's love for Jimmy, even after his death, combined with the fact that she has never really gotten over him, whittles away at, and erodes her relationship with her husband, Gerald. Both Gerald and Tom blame the war for their failure in life. In the former's situation "the war had put an end to his hopes of a fellowship at Cambridge,"(167) and people attributed his "queerness" to shell-shock.(29) About Tom, Grace thinks: "but for these hard times since the war, and not being so young as he was after four years' service he would now be in a very different position."(3) Likewise Norah had dreams of becoming a professional dancer until "the war and being a V.A.D. had put an put a stop to all that."(143) Hugh, too, contributes significantly to the post-war tone.

Invitation to the Waltz, although published in 1932, takes place in 1920 just after the First World War. It is a novel which very effectively handles many current issues with its surface humour, one of which is the war.

Invitation to the Waltz, like Dusty Answer, treats the subject of disillusion, specifically adolescent disillusion. The ball at the Spencers' presents Olivia with a series of dancing partners, all of whom contribute to her knowledge of the adult world. One partner is Timmy Douglas, a blind man. Timmy's blindness is a result of the war: struck between the eyes, in June 1918, after only three months in the army. As Timmy equably says that "it's all

a question of one's point of view--" and that "one's taught not to-- well, not to think of it as a misfortune," Olivia thinks differently about the war and its effects:

> War,[...] A cousin in the flying corps killed, the cook's nephew gone down at Jutland, rumour of the death of neighbours' sons--(that included Marigold's elder brother), and among the village faces about half a dozen familiar ones that had disappeared and never come back....(254-55)

The nature of Timmy's (changed) perceptions are different from Olivia's, and Olivia's in turn are different from those of the other dancers. In several quick passages, Lehmann adeptly reveals these perceptions:

> [Marigold says] 'Olivia's very nice with her practically black hair turned round each side of her face in a plaited bun, and a red dress.'
> Had she really said that? [thinks Olivia] The dream had come on again.[...]
> 'Would you care to dance?' he said. 'I'm afraid I'm apt to barge into people. The room's pretty full, isn't it?'
> 'Rather full.'
> She looked at him, puzzled. Once again he had turned an obvious statement into a question. She looked at him, and in a sudden stab and flash of realization, saw him as one isolated, remote, a figure alone in a far place. He was-- They collided badly with another couple, who looked at him in cold surprise.
> 'Sorry,' he said pleasantly, 'my fault.'
> He waited while they moved on. She saw the girl's face alter suddenly, not in pity, but in a look of avid curiosity. She whispered something to her partner, they both turned to stare at him. How dare they stare like that!....(246-48)

As they dance Olivia finds herself thinking, "I suppose you get used--I suppose you soon get used.... It all depends how you let yourself think about it." Just as she perceives him to be silently demonstrating to her that: "It isn't a tragedy at all. You needn't be sorry for me", he speaks cheerfully about his cottage, Cherry

Tree Cottage, with a real cherry tree,(250) symbolizing hope, and reminding the reader of the cherry tree in Dusty Answer. But, like the cherry tree in Dusty Answer that is cut down, Timmy will in the later novel become sick, proving that in post-war, post-Edwardian society, hope is not enough.

Many of the effects of the First World War were gender-specific problems that only men, like Timmy or the male cousin, could have. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar tell us that "if we meditate for a while on the sexual implications of the Great War, we must certainly decide, to begin with, that it is a classic case of the dissonance between official, male-centered history and unofficial female history,..."[69] The events of the war had very different meanings for men and women. A common feeling among soldiers was that their experience at the front had created an insurmountable barrier between them and the women back home. Communication was no longer possible. Women, and all those who had not fought, simply could not understand what the soldiers had been through, and the soldiers themselves could not articulate their experience appropriately. Some, on coming home, found the life they had once known exasperating and depressing. In one example, an English soldier, asked by a friend whether he had told his wife about the front while on leave, replied:

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[69]Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land: The place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, vol 2:Sexchanges (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989) p. 262.

> I didn't get a chance, she was so busy telln' me all the news about Mrs. Bally's cat killin' Mrs. Smith's bird, and Mrs. Cramp's sister's new dress, and how Jimmy Murphy's dog chewed up Annie Allen's new doll.[70]

When writing about her relationship with her soldier fiancé, Vera Brittain noted that war put

> a barrier of indescribable experience between men and the women whom they loved. Quite early I realised [the] possibility of a permanent impediment to understanding. 'Sometimes,' I wrote, 'I have feared that even if he gets through, what he has experienced out there may change his ideas and tastes utterly.'[71]

Gilbert and Gubar go on to suggest that not only did the war alter the soldier's experiences, but also the woman's, for

> as young men became increasingly alienated from their prewar selves, increasingly immured in the muck and blood of no man's land, increasingly abandoned by the civilization of which they had ostensibly been theirs, women seemed to become, as if by some uncanny swing of history's pendulum, ever more powerful. As nurses, as mistresses, as munitions workers, bus drivers, or soldiers in the "land army".[72]

As well as barriers in understanding and role changes, there existed other differences that Lehmann illustrated. Because of the war, the men in Lehmann's fiction are not held accountable for their emotional irresponsibility (Rollo, Rickie). They are always representative of the generation of male survivors, hurt or killed by the Great War. Rollo is the only surviving son of his family, his older brother killed at war. While his brother had been

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[70]Literary Digest, 8 March 1919, p. 105.

[71]Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth (London: Virago, 1979) p. 143.

[72]Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, op.cit., pp. 262-63.

"shocked" by the war, Rollo is never shocked and feels he can live only privately. This is less a defence than the response of his generation. Rickie too, while younger, is still part of the same emotionally crippled generation. Rickie feels that the War is the cause of his "withered heart" and feelings of inadequacy.

If the Spencers' ball in Invitation to the Waltz represents some of the last successful grapplings of a society that no longer functions and is on the brink of changing, Olivia represents this pre-war innocence--innocence of a society that imagines it will continue outdated and unjust conventions. In this way the novel takes on the theme of all Lehmann's novels, that of romantic disillusionment. The illusion is that the ball will be as it exists in Olivia's fantasies, based on the literature of the time that feeds her romantic imagination. The reality of the ball is that while it is not a disappointment per se it becomes, for Olivia, not one glamourous whole, but rather a series of fragmented pieces, or "curious fragments, odds and ends of looks" from which Olivia learns and becomes more aware.

If the Spencers' ball has not been the fairy-tale picture Olivia had imagined (as it was for Kate), it serves a rather reverse function, to open Olivia's mind to new interpretations of fast-held beliefs she had previously never thought to question or was raised never to question. Yet, despite a growing awareness, Olivia remains innocent of the fact that her world is on the brink of changing, choosing to hold on to her romantic illusions about

the genteel Spencers and their unjust world. Ultimately Invitation to the Waltz is just that, an invitation to the reader to observe the injustices of the prevailing society. But in this novel Lehmann does nothing about it, except to introduce very subtly the problems and inequalities. Not until The Weather in the Streets and later novels does she directly confront what she perceives to be great inequities in society and its exploitation by those in power.

The world that Lehmann describes in Invitation to the Waltz is that of a world in transition. Olivia's own position as a girl in the midst of transition, combined with her personal uncertainty, mirror the uncertainty and tension--felt beneath the surface at the ball--that her society feels in trying to recover its old ways after the devastation of the First World War. But as The Weather in the Streets illustrates, return to pre-war traditions and ways of life will prove to be impossible; the reality of the past will be reserved only for memories.

The Weather in the Streets functions as a representation of the post-war art-world that grew up in the aftermath of the First World War, and that of a society still clinging to class-ridden worn out traditions. It is Olivia's belonging nowhere that serves to illustrate this duality. Both novels are concerned with Olivia's interior state as she tries to please everyone. Unfortunately Olivia acts as a chameleon, moulding herself to each new set of people and surroundings; and while outwardly she appears successful in her attempts to do this, inwardly she is in a flux--as is her

society as a whole.

The Great War is always in the background and largely perceived to be responsible for the changes taking place in Britain. As Olivia describes her cousin Etty to Rollo, he remembers, "She was very attractive." And Olivia agrees, but then concedes:

> only she's got a bit teeny-looking--shrunken. And somehow she doesn't fit these earnest down-to-bedrock days. She's a pre-war model left over, really. She says garden parties and parasols and blue velvet snoods, and a stall at society bazaars and Lily Elsie... and the Dolly Dialogues and airs and graces.(79)

The entire conversation at the Spencers' dinner party with Sir Ronald illustrates the difference between "then" and "now", the old world versus the new, pre-war versus post-war. There is the contrast between the elegant and sumptuous Edwardian woman with the liberated post-war woman, represented by Olivia. This is evident when Sir Ronald regards Olivia and silently compares her to the Venable sisters:

> His eyes travelled mildly over her, and his thought was plain: Not that these curves are as they should be.... Tastes formed in the Edwardian hey day, when Aunt Blanche had, presumably, dazzled him with her upholstery.... Ah, Blanche and Millicent Venables, notable pair of sisters, graceful, witty, majestic!... And all the others....Alas! a mould discarded. These contemporary silhouettes, not only unalluring but disquieting, like so many other symptoms in the sexes nowadays....(82)

There is a similar comparison between Marigold and her mother. There is Sir Ronald's lament over the country houses in England, in their last era as private homes. And when Olivia hazards, "I

suppose it's the end of a chapter...?" Sir Ronald vehemently agrees,

> "Yes, ve end of a chapter! Ve end of all aesfetic standards! I ask myself: who'll care a hundred years from now for art and letters...?[...] Ah, but when I call to mind ve way life wass lived once here!... in ve old days... before the War.... What happy times we had, to be sure.(84, 86)

And then there is Guy, the Spencers' oldest son, who died:

> going over the top, at the head of his men, shot through the heart.... All as it should be. And they'd done what could be done: worn white for mourning; put a memorial window in the church; collected his letters and poems and all the tributes to him, had them printed for private circulation. All bore witness--nurses, governesses, schoolmasters, broken-hearted friends--all said the same: gay, brilliant, winning, virtuous, brave Guy.(87)

This quotation encapsulates hundreds of memoirs and novels, and shows Lehmann to be very much concerned with and aware of the War and the modern condition. Lehmann may look to the past, but she looks to it from a modern viewpoint.

In The Ballad and the Source, Lehmann uses military imagery to strengthen the idea of war on both a domestic and global scale. There is the war that the characters in the story continually play out, with Mrs. Jardine more a soldier than was her husband, Harry. Then there is the First World War which occurs halfway through the narrative, killing off Malcolm, Mrs. Jardine's only male descendant. The war here is also used as an image of a masculine world, where the men control and fight, and the women must play by the rules or suffer, as happens to Sibyl Jardine.

The presence of the war and the changes it brought are felt

strongly:

> Then it was August, 1914. What a mercy, said my mother, that we had not gone to France and been caught there. We could not deny it. Equally, we thought, what a mercy that Mademoiselle had been caught in Belgium. Poor woman. More than a year later a letter reached us, describing the horrors of occupation, of bombardment and starvation, of weeks spent underground in cellars. Jess said it was a judgment on her. We never saw or heard from her again.[...]
>
> As the war dragged on, [Mrs. Jardine's] letters grew fewer. I think it was towards the autumn of 1916 that they ceased.[...] For us, too, life had taken on a fixed melancholy. My father had set out without complaint upon his slow heartrending journey into the shadows. Here, there, on every hand, inchmeal, the view beyond the windows of our home contracted, clouded. Our friend's brothers, the big boys who had partnered us in the polka, Sir Roger, the Lancers at pre-war Christmas parties, were being killed in Flanders, at Gallipoli; were being torpedoed and drowned at sea. An unrelenting diet of maize and lentils brought us out in spots, chilblains caused us to limp, the bath water stopped being hot at night.
>
> Nobody except an anxious aunt with sons at the front, or an occasional harassed elderly friend from London came to stay any more. A favourite uncle was a special correspondent in France. We had looked forward to his visit, in uniform; but it was clouded for us all by his eating all the butter ration at one breakfast.
>
> Round my father's armchair, they talked about the war, the war, the war.(222-24)

There is also a much more subtle influence of war on The Ballad and the Source. It is a work that looks back in search of some explanation to why everything had gone wrong. In this way Lehmann evokes the instability and confusion of wartime and reveals possible indirect consequences.

The Echoing Grove, published in 1953, takes place just before, during, and just after the Second World War. The Spanish Civil War also occurs during part of the novel, and Dinah loses her husband to it. The characters, like Lehmann herself, are filled with a

sense of loss, a skepticism about moral values and human relationships, and an uncertainty about the permanence of anything. While evident before in such heroines as Judith Earle and Olivia Curtis, the uncertainty, now, is a result of the confusing times, especially in the wake of war. Part of the difficulty the characters have in relating to each other is the result of the war; the novel itself is a study of the nature of love in a fragmented society.

A sense of inescapable confusion is successfully represented in The Echoing Grove in several different ways. The background of war at once creates feelings of alienation and isolation, and suggests an inability to return to any state of gaiety that existed before the war. Elizabeth Taylor's "Oasis of Gaiety" bears several similarities to Lehmann's text--first in offering alternating views of family relationships through the eyes of various family members. The background of war in this story causes isolation and loneliness. The "oasis of gaiety" that Auntie can provide her daughter Dosie, is artificial and too brief. Hence Dosie,

> always felt herself leaving other people behind; they lagged after her recklessness. Even in making love she felt the same isolation--that she was speeding into a country where no one would pursue her.[73]

This description fits Dinah and similarly, in one description Dinah finds that

> the war and the bombing and all had ploughed up the past

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[73]Elizabeth Taylor, "Oasis of Gaiety," op.cit.

> so thoroughly that nothing came back from it now but these --sort of stingless ghosts: as if things in the past were themselves now, with no trailing fringes left, and only a kind of mathematical pure density.(163)

This passage is also a description of the narrative technique in Lehmann's novel, where past becomes present.

War imagery permeates the novel from the beginning. When the two sisters, Dinah and Madeleine, mistress and wife, meet for the first time after a fifteen-year separation and the death of Rickie, their conversation is strained and laughter "explodes" between them "like bubbles released under pressure". They are compared to

> two people coming back to a bombed building once familiar, shared as a dwelling, and finding all over the smashed foundations a rose-ash haze of willow herb. No more, no less. It is a ruin....(13)

Petrol rationing is also alluded to as Madeleine says to her sister, "I really ought to have come to meet you, only this blasted petrol business, I've only got two gallons left for a month..."(11-12) An innocent walk with Dinah's sheepdog is transformed into a sinister reminder when the dog battles a rat. Both dog and rat are hurt, and the rat unwilling to die, is finally put to death by Madeleine as she strikes it with a garden spade:

> She forced herself to get close to the rat to examine its potentialities. Stained, chewed, defeated -- a piece of monstrous garbage thrown away. Not moving any more, but visibly breathing. Then suddenly it moved. On the uttermost fighting verge of life it turned its head sideways and looked at her, measured her, with brilliant fixity ... No, no, no, no, no, no, ...(27)

The scene acts as a premonition of Rickie's death for the reader, as both sisters see the rat as a symbol of the dead Rickie:

> We're sorry. We did our best.... There's nothing more to be done, we'll go away. Darkness, close up this fissure; dust under roots and stones, consume our virulent contagion; silence, annul a mortal consternation. We must all recover.(29)

The implication from the beginning is that the two sisters ultimately destroyed Rickie. In a conversation with her mother shortly after his death, Dinah confirms this, stating, "I haven't forgotten Rickie. Or what we did to him."(157)

Implicit in The Echoing Grove is the basic conflict between generations, classes and ways of life. While the Second World War is in progress, Dinah and her mother discuss the past:

> 'I suppose,' mused Dinah, 'if ever a generation knew its own strength it was yours: or rather didn't know it, as the saying goes, meaning it's so tremendous it hasn't got to be consciously considered, for good or ill. We inherited your Juggernaut momentum; but of course not your sphere of operations.'
> 'Indeed!'
> 'That started to be blocked. And we seized up. Rickie must have known it in his bones long before we did. We weren't conditioned like him, not deeply, by ruling class mentality.[...]
>
> 'I detest what I know of the political views you have come to hold, but I admire you greatly, Dinah. Rickie fought his fight too in another way - [...]'(151-160)

Lehmann effectively illustrates the conflicts, and in so doing effects the union between sensibility and idea.

As in the previous texts, children or young men are killed by the war. After Rickie's death, his old friend Jack remembers him sadly, still envying him his children. When Rickie's son is killed during North Africa in the war, Jack writes a condolence letter and recalls the brief response, typical of his friend:

> 'Good of you to write. We can't get much information, probably never shall now. He was seen to fall, shot through the head - whether killed outright or finished off later we don't know - He was searched for later, but he wasn't found. Thank your lucky stars you have no sons.' No pathos, no attitude of pride or pity; not a word about the boy's mother. Flogging himself stoically along a bit further to the lonely finish.(58)

War functions as the backdrop particularly in one section of the book when, amidst bombs and blackouts, Rickie spends the night with Georgie, whose own husband is away at the front. Echoing past Lehmann heroines, Georgie says to Rickie, "But I never have expected permanence."(229) The impression is that in a world where bombs fall and death is imminent, with whom one sleeps is of little importance. During this scene Rickie talks to Georgie of his fears and insecurities, where under normal conditions he might not have.

It seems that the consciousness of the characters is pulled apart by the awareness of brutality. One also senses this in Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts (1941), with its use of a violent sexual struggle between man and wife and its constant images of airplanes, fires in the distance, and rumours of bombings to indicate the intrusion of violence into the world. In both these novels, Woolf's last and Lehmann's penultimate, it would appear that the individual conception of feminine consciousness, which characterizes their earlier novels, has been altered by the mass destruction of the Second World War. Certainly the terror of German bombing contributed to Woolf's suicide. At her home in Sussex she could hear the bombers each night on their way to London.

It is Elizabeth Bowen's The Heat of the Day (1949), however,

that would seem the novel best compared with The Echoing Grove. Written only fours years before, its plot concerns the Second World War and is a variation upon the eternal triangle. Like Lehmann with The Echoing Grove, Bowen intended The Heat of the Day to be a retrospective novel. The setting of Bowen's novel is that of wartime London, where air raids are almost constant and the threat of death is always present. For Stella, the protagonist, the threat of death increases her sensitivity and heightens her awareness of what is important and unimportant. For Rickie and Georgie (as well as for Dinah and Madeleine) the war seems only to further their overall sense of despair. The phrase "the heat of the day," from Matthew (20:12) also recalls the song from Cymbeline that echoes in Clarissa's mind throughout Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa's world, like Dinah's and Rickie's and Madeleine's, is also one in which death must be faced. Twentieth-century writers not only wrote more frequently of death, but they wrote about it on a different level than did most of their nineteenth-century predecessors.

The subject of death is more prevalent in The Echoing Grove than in any of Lehmann's past works. There is at the beginning the aforementioned death of the rat foreshadowing deaths to come. Then succeeding deaths occur: Anthony, Rickie, Mr. Burkett, Mrs. Burkett, Selbig, Rob, Georgie, Jo and Dinah's child with Rickie.

Written more than twenty years after The Echoing Grove, A Sea-Grape Tree is very different in tone. The year is 1933. The most prominent evidence of the war is Johnny, a former First War ace

pilot, now paralyzed from the waist down. "He crashed on a test flight behind our lines in France and broke his back - in the very last month of the war or thereabouts."(12) As a result of the war, Johnny agrees with Ellie Cunningham that, "the heart of the world is broken".(46) Yet while the war functions to reinforce the sense of confusion and pessimism that runs through The Echoing Grove, it functions in a slightly different way in A Sea-Grape Tree. The war's presence is felt, but instead of a cloud hanging overhead, there is more of a feeling of hope. As in Lehmann's previous novels, love is the strongest force, and what ultimately rejuvenates in both Johnny and Rebecca the life they had lost.

Evidence of the war's influence is most apparent in The Gipsy's Baby. The five short stories that form The Gipsy's Baby were all written during the war years, and, with the exception of "The Red-Haired Miss Daintreys",[74] they were first published in John Lehmann's periodical Penguin New Writing. "The Red-Haired Miss Daintreys" is set during the time of the First World War, while the three stories "When the Waters Came," "A Dream of Winter" and "Wonderful Holidays" which all contain the same main characters, Mrs. Ritchie and her two young children, John and Jane, take place during the Second World War. Each story can be considered a war story in that, like Lehmann's novels, the war in the background (or foreground) shadows the daily lives of the characters involved.

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[74]Written first for Folio's of New Writing which appeared in the Spring 1940 issue, and was then reprinted in Penguin.

The effect the war had on Lehmann herself is particularly evident in "The Red-Haired Miss Daintreys". The characters' preoccupation with war is unmistakable. The following summer the Ellisons go again to the island for their vacation, but this time the Daintreys do not come.

> It was the last week in July, 1914. The Daintreys were to come in August. On August 5th the shore was totally deserted. Acting upon the assumption that the German fleet would immediately steam up the Channel and open fire upon the bay, everybody had fled to the mainland. We stayed on and had our holiday much as usual. Of the world crisis I remember only that sudden emptiness of the beach and the expression on my father's face as he sat reading the papers all day, and his saying to my mother: 'It'll be over by Christmas.' Khaki figures and barbed-wire entanglements appeared round the fort on the downs. Battleships steamed by, gun practice shook us several times a day, once or twice an aeroplane bumbled across the straits and toppled about and landed for a few hours. Sylvia and I spent a long broiling afternoon stalking a German spy who turned out to be a well-known elderly author walking over from his house in Freshwater Bay to visit my parents. We waited for the Daintreys, but they did not come. The island never saw them as a family again.(82)

Like Invitation to the Waltz this passage reveals Lehmann's humour in the face of danger and a certain resolve to continue with life, just as the Ellison family does.

At the start of the war John Lehmann wrote:

> During that first Autumn of the war, most of the writers I knew, who had remained with us, seemed incapable of producing very much. Stunned by the catastrophe, oppressed by a deep melancholy, totally uncertain about the kind of future we were entering, their instinct was either to immerse themselves in journals, to try and make sense of the changed world around them and of their own thoughts in this pre-Apocalyptic moment, or to plunge back into the past of childhood and youth, times which now stood out in memory with a strange insulated intensity, and hallucinatory effulgence. Out of this mood were to come such variously beautiful achievements as [...] my

sister Rosamond's story 'The Red-Haired Miss Daintreys'....[75] He writes how "Rosamond had made up her mind, as Virginia had, to treat the whole situation as a challenge to her creative powers,"[76] something which is evident in her stories.

It is the last paragraph of the short story, however, perhaps more than any other, that, with its note of finality in the last sentence, reveals the true emotions of the times:

> Doubtless Wendy and Peter managed somehow to expand their frames and grow up to look and behave much like other people: but not in the least like their relations of the two former generations. Product of an expanding age, the mould is broken that shaped and turned those out. Forced up too rapidly, the power in them, so lavish and imposing as it seemed, sank down as rapidly and faded out. There will be no more families in England like the Daintrey family.(89-90)

In a few sentences the pre-war era, much as in Dusty Answer, is perfectly evoked. Throughout this story Lehmann is interested in delineating the ending of an era, and this she does well. She also saw with the two World Wars the danger of acquiring a sameness, and little hope of the future individuality for which she and her generation stood. Thus her description of Peter and Wendy, the children of the Daintrey boy, Norman reflect this fear.

The next three stories are linked by a common Second World War theme and by their use of the third-person point of view. In all three stories war is contrasted with peaceful life in the village, and the inner life of children is contrasted with parental

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[75]John Lehmann, I Am My Brother (London: Longmans, 1960) p.32

[76]Ibid., p. 36.

responsibility.

In the short story "When the Waters Came" the time is the first winter of the Second World War. Mrs. Ritchie lies in her bed and thinks of the war as sprawling,

> like a child too big to get born it would die in the womb and be shovelled underground, disgracefully, as monsters are, and after a while, with returning health and change of scene, we would forget that we conceived it.(93)

In this story the war and peace contrast is emphasized by the reactions of Mrs. Ritchie and her children to a sudden releasing of natural forces that disrupts the normally peaceful routine of their daily life in the village. The story contrasts the suddenness and violence of natural disaster with that of the on-going war. Margaret Ritchie's sympathies are only half-heartedly with the lone soldier or sailor as she thinks:

> of course, of sailors freezing in unimaginable wastes of water, perhaps to be plunged beneath them between one violent moment and the next; of soldiers numb in the black-and-white nights on sentry duty, crammed, fireless, uncomforted on the floors of empty barns and disused warehouses. In her soft bed, she thought of them with pity--masses of young men, betrayed, helpless, and so much colder, more uncomfortable than human beings should be. But they remained unreal, as objects of pity frequently remain.(93)

They remain unreal to her until after her own scare within the frost and flood.

In the story, an abrupt change in the weather brings freezing rain and a frozen landscape. The freeze represents the sterile beginning of war. For the adults the bad weather literally means danger to both humans and animals. For the children "every natural

object had become a toy: twigs, stones, blades of grass cased in tubes of ice [...] a miracle."(94) But at the post office

> the customary group of villagers was gathered, discussing the portents, their slow, toneless, deprecating voices made almost lively by shocked excitement. The sheep in the top field had been found frozen to the ground. Old Mrs. Luke had slipped up on her doorstep and broken her thigh. The ambulance sent to take her to the hospital had gone backwards into the ditch and overturned. Pigeons were stuck dead by their claws on branches. The peacock at the farm had been brought in sheathed totally in ice: that was the most impressive item.(94)

Thus the village's own tragedies foreshadow the horrors of war.

Then, after weeks of silence, the thaw comes, "not gradually but with violence, overnight. Torrents of brown snow-water poured down from the hills into the valley. By the afternoon, the village street was gone."(95) Mrs. Ritchie and her children stand near their cottage and watch. Unafraid of the water, Mrs. Ritchie lets John and Jane venture forth. War imagery is ever present as Jane asks her mother, "Has anything got drowned?" To which her mother replies, "No." The village street becomes a miniature battle field with the water running "so fast and feverish, carrying winter away. The earth off the ploughed field made a reddish stain in it, like blood, and stalks of last year's dead corn were mixed and tumbled in it."(96) The corn as dead soldiers and the red stains like blood recall the war; likewise, the description of Jane falling down could easily have been that use to describe a soldier as he is shot. As the children wander off in the stream, they suddenly part and Mrs. Ritchie becomes afraid. She has a premonition and then it happens:

> Jane, rushing forward to seize a branch, went down. Perfectly silent, her astonished face framed in its scarlet bonnet fixed on her brother, her Wellingtons waterlogged, she started to sink, to sway and turn with the current and be carried away.(97)

The tragedy is averted, but as Mrs. Ritchie carries the waterlogged child home, she feels guilt:

> An adventure, not a disaster, she told herself unhopefully, stumbling and splashing up towards the garden over the ploughed field, weighed into the earth with the weight of the child, and of her ever more enormous clogged mud-shoes that almost would not move; and with the weight of her own guilt and Jane's and John's, struggling together without words in lugubrious triangular reproach and anxiety.(97)

But by the evening feelings are restored back to normal, and the incident is looked on as an adventure. "Adventure recollected in tranquility made them all feel cheerful."(98) But like the war, its shadow remains, for Jane remembers that she saw a drowned "chicking" in the flood, though her mother had assured her there was no death. Mrs. Ritchie looking out the window to the new and green world wonders, "What will the spring bring? Shall we be saved?"(98) Or will they be drowned, like the "chicking". She recognizes a release from a frozen historical paralysis and despair into a historical movement, indicating change and continuity. It is in the endings of "When the Waters Came" and "A Dream of Winter" that Lehmann stresses the sense of precariousness and violence of wartime, and the foreboding of future despair.

In "A Dream of Winter" there is similar use of contrast and more obvious analogy. Mrs. Ritchie is confined to her bed with influenza during a long frost. Her passivity is interrupted by a

man who comes to remove a swarm of bees buried in the wall outside her window--just as in the previous story when Mrs. Ritchie's inertia is relieved by the flood. The constant buzzing of the bees has been a source of frustration to her, like the economic deprivations of the war. The swarm of bees, though innocent, come to represent the war as imagery pervades this story as well. Mrs. Ritchie had dreamt of

> honey pouring bountifully out from beneath her roof tree, to be stored up in family jars, in pots and bowls, to spread on the bread and sweeten the puddings, and save herself a little longer from having to tell the children: No more sugar.(105)

But when the bee man tells her it is too late to get much honey, her disappointment symbolizes all her pent frustrations:

> Her enemy, so attentive since the outbreak of the war whispered in her ear: 'Just as I thought. Another sentimental illusion. Schemes to produce food by magic strokes of fortune. Life doesn't arrange stories with happy ending any more, see? Never again.(106)

While the bee man does find more honey than he thought, Mrs. Ritchie is shocked when he tells her that the absence of honey could mean the swarm had starved, and she becomes suddenly aware of her minor problems compared with those the war could present: "Crawling death by infinitesimal stages. Not a question of no surplus, but of the bare necessities of life."(107) Thus, the war parallels not only the destructiveness in nature, but Mrs. Ritchie's individual act of destruction in removing the bees. Her son makes matters worse when he questions her.

> 'Look here, Mum what on earth did you want to get rid of the poor blighters for? They never did any harm.'

'Think of the maddening noise they made.'
'We like the noise. If you can't stand the hum of a wretched little bee, what'll you do in an air-raid?'(110)

Finally, when John and Jane bring her the honey she has been dreaming of, she finds her dream was really an illusion, a favourite theme of Lehmann's. The honey had stayed in the comb too long to taste very good.

The dramatic ending provides another black reminder of war. The bird that John has brought in to thaw out begins to gain life beside Mrs. Ritchie's fire. When it escapes from his hands and flies into the flames, Mrs. Ritchie leaps from her bed to snatch it out:

> Smell of burnt feather, charred fragments flaking down. It was on the hearth-stone. Everybody stared. Suddenly it revived, it began to stagger about. The tenacity of life in its minute frame appalled her. Over the carpet it bounced, one wing burnt off, one leg shrivelled up under its breast, no tail; up and down, vigorously, round and about.
> 'Is it going to be alive?' said Jane.
> 'Yes,' said John coldly, heavily. 'We can't do anything about it now.(112)

The disturbing ending is reminiscent of the dead swallow in A Note in Music. But more than anything else it seems an obvious symbol of the war's physical and psychological mutilation of human beings, as well as confirmation of the above, "Life doesn't arrange stories with happy endings anymore."

The last story "Wonderful Holidays" is more light-hearted than the previous two stories, yet still carries tragic overtones. There are indirect references throughout the story that war lies in the background. In one instance Mrs. Carmichael asks Mrs. Ritchie,

"Does your head always ache these days?" And the latter replies, "Always."(150) Also the death of Conker, the Carmichaels' horse, acts as a symbol. Children's awareness of death, alluded to in the previous two stories, is more direct with Jane's innocent question, "Do they make special small bombs for children?"(120) Direct references are the minor wartime frustrations that occur throughout the story. There are the food shortages and rationings, the problems of getting from the Ministry of the Interior a movie for the entertainment and of preparing with Mrs. Carmichael a humourous skit, and Mrs. Ritchie's annoyance at the gossiping vicar for asking her to serve on one more committee. The problem that seems to occupy her the most, however, is the failure of Jane's trunk to arrive from school. Until its recovery Mrs. Ritchie thinks of little else. One evening as she is thus occupied, she hears two sounds: the roar of airplanes overhead, and her children singing at the Carmichaels'. Thus, a multiple contrast is evident--that of danger and safety, adults and children, and minor problems compared to greater world problems. Later during a lunch with her housekeeper, Mrs. Ritchie at least realizes how inconsequential her problems are next to some of Mrs. Plumley's stories of the tragic lives of some village people: "In view of this reminiscence, and of their dramas, recollected now in detail[...] to dwell on the profundities of emotion caused by a piece of luggage lost and found seemed--though Mrs. Plumley accorded them their due--disproportionate and self-indulgent."(136)

That afternoon, looking for their daughters, Mrs. Ritchie and Mrs. Carmichael wander into the beech-wood. When unable to find their children, they are stopped by a sight, a symbol of hope:

> They looked up and saw that, high above their heads, the crowns of six vast cherry trees in blossom intermingled with the roof of branches, pierced it, shot great luminous rockets through it into the sky. They could just see the tips of the boughs exploding in incandescent star-clusters against the blue.(153)

Under the largest of the cherry trees lie the two little girls. Then the attractive Roger Wickham, a mysterious figure much like Hugh in A Note in Music, appears and gives half of his bunch of cherry branches to each woman. Also, like that with the lilac tree and Grace in A Note in Music, a moment of beauty has come to Mrs. Ritchie with the sight of the blossoming cherry trees and the handsome young man bearing his gift.

The similarity between Grace and Hugh, and Mrs. Ritchie and Roger Wickhan appears again at the end of the story. On the night of the entertainment there is a party afterwards. Mrs. Ritchie dances with Roger and it affects her deeply. She ventures shyly an invitation to him to visit them some time, but he tells her it will not be possible; he is soon to enter the army. The war, forgotten for the moment in the excitement of the evening, returns to claim her thoughts. Then with the feelings of futility and uncertainty that characterized the period, he says to her, "You see, as things are, it's rather pointless really, isn't it, to commit myself, to choose, to have a future..."(189)

At home Mrs. Ritchie gets into bed with a copy of Shakespeare's Images of Man and Nature. She lies in bed,

> staring at the tall white vase of cherry. Beautiful, beautiful, triumphant consolation. But one branch was withering already; and as she watched, a whole flurry of petals dropped down out of the sheaf and fell on the table.(192)

She hears "a strong force of [...] bombers passing overhead" before falling asleep, and is then woken by the sound of John's voice as he comes home and goes through the kitchen to the larder. The contrast between the children's innocent joy with the holidays and the mother's inability to escape for long the presence of war point to the differences in the child's world and the adult's. Finally the use of the cherry tree, reminiscent of Dusty Answer, represents the fragility of youth and beauty.

The stories in New Writing exhibit a pronounced and obvious social consciousness. But it is Lehmann's subtle depiction of war throughout all her works that raises her novels from merely well-written and amusing texts describing an era, to works defining and shaping an era.

In all Lehmann's novels there are feelings of isolation and of impermanence in love. This is at least partially attributable to the war. All Lehmann's heroines, no matter how pretty or intelligent, feel that they are outsiders and that there is no permanence in love. Olivia wants "to make something important

enough to be forever,"(44) and has, an "almost fatal hunger for permanence" that was one result of, as Samuel Hynes states, her "generation's judgment of a world emptied of significance".[77] Where many of her male contemporaries tried to resolve this predicament in politics, Lehmann explored the paradoxical moral and psychological dimensions of betrayal, male and female deception, disillusionment and personal isolation.

The great artistic movements that were direct results of the War were vehemently opposed to war's destruction. Likewise, the creativity that Lehmann's heroines turn to when confronted with isolation or "outsider" feelings is equally opposed to war's destruction. The next section will consider the importance of isolation in Lehmann's texts, and its relation to her as a modern writer.

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[77]Samuel Hynes, op.cit., p. 59.

Isolation

All of Lehmann's heroines experience feelings of isolation. It is possible, and even likely, that these feelings may be felt, either directly or indirectly as a result of the war. It is helpful, then, to discuss such feelings of isolation in a modernist context, as a result of the World Wars, as compared with the alienation and isolation known to man over the ages. In A Note in Music Ralph Seddon realizes

> for the first time in his life, [...] how profoundly each individual life is concealed. In spite of all public indications such as faces, words, actions, the blank persists.(161)

All Lehmann's novels are studies of how individual lives are concealed and how individuals contend with the human condition.

Whether the result of expectations that are not met, or feelings of failure, frustration or disappointment, the feeling of isolation occurs in each of Lehmann's novels among different characters. While isolation takes many forms, one cause of it arguably stems from the volatile and uncertain times through which Lehmann lived. Elements of Lehmann's own life are obviously evident in her novels; many of her main characters have been identified with her own self. But to assume from this that all her novels are

autobiographical is a mistake and too simple an analysis of her writing.

One can see the slightest indications of rebellion and independence in the young Rosamond Lehmann: "One thing Girton has taught me, that is, a contempt for examination systems and the false, miserable values of girls' life."[78] She nevertheless appears to have been a well-adjusted adolescent. The fictional characters of Judith and Olivia, then, are not strictly projections of Lehmann as a young woman. This sense of solitude, however, would be learned later in life. A Note in Music is a product of Lehmann's years living in Newcastle-upon-Tyne with her first husband.

In "The Author" Lehmann wrote

> It was then [in Newcastle-upon-Tyne] that the problems of identity and meaning started to become acute. Outwardly I was an enviable, popular young woman, married into a distinguished (teetotal) family, mistress of a large solid house in a Victorian terrace, and (good heavens!) of a cook and a house-parlour-maid, enthusiastic tennis player, giver of somewhat joyless little dinner parties (no wine, no spirits--it appalls me to remember); and no prospect of a pram in the hall.... I was assailed by blank misgivings. I was a misfit--I wanted to desert.[79]

These last two lines very much mirror Grace Fairfax's feelings in A Note in Music. This learning of the essential isolation of human existence, even in love, is one of the themes throughout Lehmann's novels. The process of growing up is often described in terms of

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[78]Rosamond Lehmann, personal letters: letter to mother from Girton, 22 May 1920, King's College, Cambridge.

[79]Gillian Tindall, op.cit., p. 48. (The original quotation, Rosamond Lehmann, "The Author" (London, 1983).

increasing awareness of one's basic solitude in the world (Dusty Answer, A Note in Music, The Weather in the Streets), resulting from feelings of inadequacy and the need for approval. In Rosamond Lehmann's Album Lehmann writes, "I have never felt altogether at home in the world, as if I had made some mistake before birth, in a previous incarnation, and could never put it right."[80] Lehmann also chose the profession of writing, and with the very act of writing, Lehmann was confirming the position of the artist as an isolated figure in society. Characters in her novels reinforce this idea. Yet at the same time, it is a position in which the artist, although isolated by his or her chosen way of life, is able to free him or herself by way of creativity.

Almost all of Lehmann's novels present recurrent examples of women feeling unloved, unwanted, lonely and left out of life--what Gillian Tindall terms "the permanent outsider theme".[81] Since novels throughout the ages, particularly modern or post-modern, have dealt with alienation themes, I will limit the number of comparisons to Lehmann's text. I would like to examine Lehmann's heroines in relation to those of Jean Rhys for, to me, Rhys's female characters exemplify the completely isolated woman. While Lehmann's women may never reach quite the victimized or impoverished states that the Jean Rhys-woman does, they are

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[80]Rosamond Lehmann, op.cit., p. 11.

[81]Gillian Tindall, op.cit., p. 34.

nevertheless isolated by the fact of their sex, and therefore could easily fall into the same predicaments as, for example, Dinah almost does, and Olivia does for a period of time.

While Rhys's preoccupation is with themes of financial dependence and male domination, and of the helplessness and passivity of the female, Lehmann's women all seem to have a certain amount of means, therefore their isolation must stem originally from inner conflicts, and from the unpredictable times. The woman in the Rhys novel lives in a harsher, more naked, less-sophisticated world than the women in the works of Lehmann. Yet both Rhys's and Lehmann's women are without particular careers, or real talents; and while some of Lehmann's heroines have education and ambition, none of Rhys's women do. Rhys's women move within a closed and essentially deterministic universe. Lehmann's must manoeuver within the same structure, but Lehmann offers more hope--at least ambivalent hope. They both write of love failed, but Rhys concentrates directly on the sexual tensions and game playing that go on between a dominant male and a passive female, where Lehmann writes about "romantic" love very much from the subjective viewpoint of the female, with the male character less well realized.

One kind of isolation that appears in Lehmann's novels which may have been intensified because of the wars, is the isolation the adolescent feels when experiencing the pains of growing up and sensing the gap between her world and the world of adults. This

awareness is accompanied by feelings of insecurity and suffering. In Invitation to the Waltz Olivia at the age of seventeen expresses these feelings as she experiences,

> a sudden distress of spirit, thinking in a half-conscious way that she hadn't yet found herself... couldn't--could not put herself together, all of a piece. During a period of insanity she had accepted, with alacrity, with excitement, an invitation to a dance. Now, this moment having recovered her wits, she saw what she was in for.
> Why go? It was unthinkable. Why suffer so much? Wrenched from one's foundations: neglected, ignored, curiously stared at; partnerless, watching Kate move serenely from partner to partner, pretending not to watch; pretending not to see one's hostess wondering: must she do something about one again?--(but really one couldn't go on and on introducing these people); pretending not to care; slipping off to the ladies' cloakroom, fiddling with unnecessary pins and powder, ears strained for the music to stop; wandering forth and again to stand by oneself against the wall, hope struggling with despair beneath a mask of smiling indifference [...] Oh, horrible images! Solitude in the midst of crowds! Feast from which, sole non-participator, one would return empty!(126-27)

An ironic sense of humour, reflected in Lehmann's as well as Rhys's works, serves to both relieve and deepen the sometimes bitter experiences of the heroines.

At the ball Olivia dances with the lecherous old Mr. Verity. After numerous dances, she longs to get away from him, yet fears she'll hurt him if she does:

> I can't bear you. She gave up smiling; almost gave up answering. Her face set stiffly, in utter dejection. Next dance I'll say I'm booked and go and hide in the cloakroom. But he'll know it's an excuse. It'll hurt his feelings. He'll go away and think, I'm a lonely old man.(239)

Mr. Verity symbolizes not only isolation, but also future disillusion, for Olivia becomes aware of

> the painfulness of seeing an old white-haired person

> humiliated before youth, ashamed of wanting the thing he wanted. He'd never get it. It was too late. He was old and done for. How his heart must ache.(243)

Where Olivia feels pity for the old man, many of Rhys's female characters will need the older man for financial survival.

For young Olivia the ball is symbolic of the world outside the familiar and reassuring conditions of her present life. The isolation Olivia feels at the dance should be less painful to the reader, and is often seen as comical, because it is seen as a natural step in growing up. Olivia will easily forget her earlier loneliness and apprehension when she meets Rollo outside on the terrace.

If the isolation Olivia feels in Invitation to the Waltz is a normal step in reaching adulthood, it is less debilitating and inhuman than the alienation and suffering she feels in The Weather in the Streets. It is in the first book that Olivia has her initial experience with alienation caused by class differences, exemplified by the Spencers and their inner circle of friends, and contrasted against Kate and herself. Olivia also has her first experience with a truly, physically isolated man, Timmy.

On the morning after the ball, the reader realizes Olivia has changed: when she realizes Kate is not going to share her secrets any more. Like most of Lehmann's heroines, Olivia welcomes her new independence and individuality. She is on her way to becoming the Olivia of ten years later in the sequel, in which this newfound sense of personal identity will turn to personal isolation. Many of

the same emotions found in Invitation to the Waltz appear, albeit in a more adult and mature, and consequently more painful, guise, in The Weather in the Streets.

Dusty Answer depicts an inkling of isolation in every character portrayed. Judith's and the cousins' world is brought drastically to an end by the war; Lehmann contrasts the pre-war, Edwardian days of childhood excellently against the uncertainty of growing adolescence and the beginning understanding of adult life.

In Dusty Answer Judith is a prime example of isolation, both physically and emotionally. Her physical isolation and lack of contact with children her own age, except for the Fyfe cousins, explain to a large extent the intensity of her feelings about them and her inability to regard them accurately. Although it is clear Judith is in love with Roddy, she is probably also in love with all of the cousins or at least with their image. Because she has never known any other children of her own age except the Fyfes, she put all her love and passion into them. But they remain for the most part elusive. Judith is frustrated, and the greater her isolation the greater her passion toward the cousins. Like passion in love, hers leads to the "over valuation" of the object (Roddy) or objects (all of the Fyfes). Before leaving for Cambridge she confesses to Roddy:

> ...do you realize I've never known anyone of my own age except the gardener's little girl and one or two local children--and all of you? After you left, when we were little, I was so lonely I... You don't know. Daddy would never let me be sent to school. Now you're back, I expect every day to wake up and

find you all vanished again.(103)

As in an adult relationship, she experiences insecurity over her beloveds: they could vanish from her life. Once at Cambridge, however, among contemporaries for the first time, the cousins lose some of their importance, as Jennifer, the most attractive girl in the college, becomes the centre for all Judith's attention. With Jennifer, Judith's sense of isolation vanishes. But with this new love comes fear. Just as she felt with the cousins, Judith is afraid of losing her new friend.

> Meanwhile there was Jennifer to be loved with a bitter maternal love, because she was afraid. And because, some day, she might be gone. For Jennifer said "I love you" and fled away. You cried "Come back!" and she heard and returned in anguish, clasping you close but dreading your dependence. One day when you most needed her, she might run away out of earshot, and never come back.(152)

Paradoxically, as her isolation diminishes, Judith becomes less independent--until the end. She becomes fragmented and partial, and only made good when reunited with the beloved again.

This kind of isolation and fear resulting from love, illustrated so well in Dusty Answer, is in its way a kind of privileged suffering, one that does not occur without love in the first place. A more extreme or pitiful example of isolation is illustrated in the figure of Mabel Fuller, "always pathetic...always grotesque and untouched by charm so that it was impossible to think of her or look at her without revulsion."(153)

Mabel is an archetype. We may all be repelled by Mabels, but we may also be afraid that at some level Mabel may be lurking in us

and that without effort, or luck, we could be dismissed as Mabels by the Roddys and Jennifers of life.

> Judith went downstairs, looked for the fifth time in the box labelled E for letters addressed to herself, knew for the fifth time there could be none, and went on again, wandering among the ground-floor corridors; desired in sudden panic to get back to her room and found she had lost her way.
> A girl came out of a door carrying a hot water can. She wore a pink flannel dressing-gown.
> "Could you tell me," asked Judith, "how to get to a corridor called C?"
> The girl looked at her closely and then beamed behind her glasses.
> "Oh Miss Earle! Of course! We were up together for Scholarship Exams. Come in."
> Judith, helplessly conscious that this unpleasant dream was becoming a definite nightmare, followed her.
> "Sit down," said the girl. "I'm so glad you came to find me. You remember my name--Mabel Fuller."
> Oh god! the creature thought she had been singled out for the purpose of soliciting friendship....
> "I am so very glad you came to see me. I dare say you feel very strange?"
> "A little. But I'm quite all right, thank you."
> "One feels very lonely at first. Never mind. Do you know any one else? No, nor do I." Her eyes glinted. "We must stick together till we've got our bearings."(129-30)

Although Judith does not become a Mabel, her loveliness and intelligence are not enough to protect her from isolation in the end. As she prophetically guesses earlier, she does lose Jennifer, and she has already lost Roddy. At the end of the novel the reader sees Judith,

> going home again to be alone. She smiled, thinking suddenly that she might be considered an object for pity, so complete was her loneliness.(354)

But she faces her loneliness with a sense of relief, believing it like Olivia after the ball, to be independence:

> She was rid at last of the weakness, the futile obsession of

> dependence on other people. She had nobody now except herself; and that was best.(355)

Judith finally realizes that the relationships that have so occupied her youth are now over and she is left with only a dusty answer.

With the exception of The Echoing Grove, personal isolation finds its most pronounced and profound expression in A Note in Music. Personal loneliness and the futility of life are the pervasive factors in the lives of the characters in this text.

Grace Fairfax is at first glance the most lamentable. Yet, although she is outwardly dull, she is not stupid and often shows an ironic sense of humour in her resignation to life, revealed to the reader by her interior monologues. Grace's loveless, lifeless marriage is an example of the worst and most terrifying form of isolation. Her husband, Tom, knows very little about her and she is not especially interested in him either.

> As Grace pulled a hat painfully over the great knob of her hair, she thought that shingling might improve her temper. After all, Tom would probably never notice if she shaved off every hair on her head, or wore it in a reckless frizz. He never looked at any one much; only slight, unseeing, almost furtive glances. It must be years since he had looked at her. And still, she thought, going downstairs again and seeing him below her in the hall, massive, red-necked, buttoning his over coat--still she went on watching him, his presence remained a constant paradox; still, though she had taken him and marriage and all for granted long, long ago, she could not quite get used to living with this man.(16)

Even after Hugh has left and Grace has gained something from the experience, she still questions the mystery of individual isolation. One night, unable to sleep, she turns and watches Tom

asleep:

> She turned and looked at him. She saw the outline of a head upon the pillow--a man's dark head beside her, perfectly still.... It might be Tom. It might be Hugh. It might be a stranger.(312)

The title of the novel shouts of isolation. A note in music isolated from the rest. Yet at the same time Lehmann's novels attempt to relate this sense of loneliness to past and future as well as to the present. And one seemingly trivial moment can in fact redeem all the excruciating loneliness that has gone before and that one knows is yet to come, establishing the present to be nothing but as it apertains to what is past and what is to come, and confirm that life may be still worth living.

Grace is this type of Lehmann character. Grace's life appears to be made of nothing. She thinks to herself "It should be a simple matter to abolish ten years of nothingness."(165) And she is afraid of the fortune-teller who might say:

> This is a most curious case. There is nothing here; nothing in your past, nothing in your future. As for character--lazy--greedy--secretive--without will or purpose.(2)

But Grace is none of these. Instead she is a product of her time and place. And in fact there is something there, and it is what Grace creates. For even at the end of the novel, an observer might regard Grace's life as completely empty, boring and depressing, but Grace's encounters with Hugh, however few and brief, are the notes in music of Grace's life; and it is this that makes it bearable for her to go on. It also is implicit in the narrative that after Hugh

has left, the memory of him and what he represented will allow Grace to move into the future and will make her a stronger person so that she may have more encounters.

Grace is the most self-conscious character in the novel, and perhaps also the most sensitive. Although her life is outwardly dull, her inner sensitivity allows her to feel life more intensely, and to abandon her basic isolation to a greater extent than any of the other outwardly more successful characters. The same power of imagination which separates her from her depressing home life and provincial northern surroundings is what also allows her love for and fantasies of Hugh to become a life in their own, and an escape from the reality of isolation.

Her love for Hugh proves not a draining experience, but rather an enriching one, for even after his departure she is able to carry on with this secret, new-found knowledge within her. That his effect on her is positive is illustrated when she sees him and Clare in the park. After chatting only a few moments,

> she watched them go--charged already with that excess of mystery, that weight of meaning which they were to bear for her henceforth, for ever after.... They had refreshed her.... She had been filled with a sense of momentary adequacy as a person; had been enabled to give utterance to little things which were her own.(89-90)

In one other way there is more to Grace than one might first see. Although completely friendless, except for Norah, and socially unpopular, she has her own special relationship with nature. She was often happiest on her own, especially in the country where she

was reminded of her youth. On her own and in the country she could experience a kind of oneness with nature that she could not find with humans. She contemplated nature, but did not share her feelings with Tom or anyone else. Because of nature, she does not feel so solitary on the vacation she takes on her own. She uses natural forces to regain her stability in the face of other alienating experiences:

> A row of hollyhocks bloomed against the fruit wall at the end of the garden. She fancied that their round heads were notes of music painted upon an outspread scroll; chords and scales splashed down in tones of rose and crimson upon the green keyboard of the espalier. Soon, she thought, in the present heightening and harmony of the interplay of all her senses they would strike audibly upon her ears.... She walked through the cornfields. In the wind, something more bodiless than flame flickered and ran over the green grain and the blond. The spirit moved upon the face of the corn.(193-94)

It is evident that Grace, like most of Lehmann's heroines, has a love of beauty, much as Olivia does in Invitation to the Waltz, and it is this that saves her from being completely dull or pitiable. It is also nature which helps her to combat her feelings of total isolation within human society. She believes she can succeed with hollyhocks and birds--although symbolically even here she does not[82]--where she cannot with people.

Another form of isolation noticeable in this novel is again

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[82]On her trip Grace discovers a young swallow that has been hurt. She picks it up and carries it inside, hoping to cure it. In the morning when she wakes, she sees it is gone; she is happy and thinks it a good omen--for she has for once touched something and not destroyed it. But, in fact, what she does not see is that the swallow has fallen and died. (See also the charred bird at the end of "A Dream of Winter.")

the kind which is brought about by different social classes. As in Invitation to the Waltz, the distinctions between classes, now presented to an even greater degree, do not ever permit the two worlds to successfully merge or blend. That Hugh and Clare stand above Tom and Grace in society is first evident when Hugh is introduced in hunting pink. It is Annie, not Grace, who recognizes his attire and offers him an egg:

> Annie came in with the tea-table, opened eyes of astonishment and delight, and remarked gently:
> "Would the gentleman care for a boiled egg?"
> She had been with a hunting family once, and she knew what pink coats meant at tea-time. Mrs. Fairfax, poor soul, would never have thought of it.(45)

The reader is reminded of class differences in Invitation to the Waltz when Olivia makes a blunder when discussing the hunt. After dancing George asks Olivia:

> 'Were you out today?'
> 'Oh yes.'
> 'Jolly good day, wasn't it?'[...]
> 'Yes, it was nice.' Rather surprising. It had been so very wet. But perhaps he liked walking in the rain.
> 'Going out on Saturday--?'
> 'I expect so.' Rather mystifying. 'I go out every day, really.'
> 'What? Do you honestly?' He looked very much impressed, but at the same time rather incredulous. After a bit of thinking he said:
> 'You don't live round here, then?'
> 'Oh yes. At least, only eight miles away.'[...]
> 'But I didn't know there were more than two packs within fifty miles.'
> Bombshells. Death and damnation. Hideous light in darkness. Consternation. Humiliation.
> 'Oh, I thought you meant... I misunderstood. I don't--as a matter of fact, I don't really hunt.[...] It looks so lovely too, doesn't it? The red coats.'
> 'The what?'
> 'The colour, I mean.'

> He said very distinctly, looking straight in front of him:
> 'Oh, the pink coats.'
> 'Yes, the pink coats.'
> She tried to repeat it indifferently, as if correcting what of course had been a mere unaccountable slip of the tongue. She remembered now too late: coats were pink, dogs were hounds. But he remained aloof, made a few more perfunctory remarks, left her with alacrity as soon as the music began again. He didn't ask for another dance.(208-11)

In A Note in Music Hugh's difference is further exemplified when he is contrasted with Pansy, the prostitute. Easy-going, carefree, "perfectly happy....not afraid of anything;... always... lucky(242) is how Grace perceives Hugh. But it is perhaps Hugh who is the most isolated and possibly the most tragic character in the book. "A wanderer," as Grace also sees him; "simply hopeless", as he views himself. Because of outside elements: his position, money, and good looks, he manages to partially satisfy himself. Conversely, Grace's satisfaction must come from within herself. At the end Grace, although still appearing to be outwardly depressed or depressing, has achieved an inner stability and peace. Hugh, on the other hand, remains restless and at the end of the novel he is again setting off abroad, alone and melancholy:

> Well--there was always a time of loneliness, depression, after the first excitement of the start, the bustle of departure.... A damned awful mood had come over him, amounting to: Why live?(313-14)

The only main character in this novel who comes near a certain equilibrium in life is Clare, Hugh's sister. As Clare, who is now divorced and determined to stay alone forever, thinks about her past, echoes of Judith at the end of Dusty Answer can be heard:

> Clare despised her youth and all its storms.... One goes by oneself, one is free, one enjoys oneself without fear of other people's opinions; ones sees to it that no relationship shall sweep one beyond the balancing point where possession of oneself ceases and suffering begins.(78)

Like Judith, it is Clare who chooses this particular path. She achieves a partial contentment, but at the price of loneliness.

Another of Lehmann's heroines who chooses isolation is Olivia, now an adult. The Olivia in The Weather in the Streets is by her very lifestyle isolated. Having separated from her husband, renounced her previous middle class life and embraced the one of a Bohemian artist, she has made herself an outsider in society. Because she has renounced the values with which she grew up, she can no longer fit into the conventional middle class society of her parents and Kate, but neither is she completely a "Bohemian" or an artist. By having an affair with Rollo, an upper-class man, she is going against her Bohemian friends' values, and therefore belongs to neither group completely.

The Weather in the Streets starts the examination that The Echoing Grove will complete, of the difficulty in human relationships of ever merging successfully and completely with another. In her subject matter, then, Lehmann demonstrates her works' modernity. Where many novels would glorify love and romance, Lehmann shows that even in love, the most significant events are ultimately individual experiences. Lehmann shows us the post-war--emphasis on the (alienated) individual--condition in each of her characters. If suffering isolates, so too does love, for it is a

condition of being outside of normal life. Love proves to isolate Olivia still further; she has time only for Rollo. She feels that, "not being together was a vacuum.... There were no questions in this time. All was agreeing, answer after answer melting, lapsing into one another...."(144) And:

> Being in love with Rollo was all-important, the times with him the only reality; yet in another way they had no existence in reality.(161)

Being in love isolates Olivia for she forgets to care for her friends. In the words of Virginia Woolf, "nothing is so strange when one is in love... as the complete indifference of other people".[83] After the halcyon days of early romance Olivia thinks:

> Having a love affair makes one very remote and useless to one's friends. I didn't care much at that time what happened to any of them.(203)

And it seems her friends' reaction is to give her up just as easily for, as she tells Rollo:

> 'I haven't much life of my own in between--now--to fill up." I've given up seeing most people; they all think of me as remote now, under a glass case, not mingling with them. They're bored with me.'(316)

Are twentieth-century authors able to create such believably isolated characters because of their own feelings of alienation in a mercurial society? As noted, while Lehmann was beautiful and intelligent, she nonetheless felt out of place in the world. But perhaps it was Lehmann's very position in society that left her so unable to connect. Critics have claimed that writers, such as

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[83]Mrs. Dalloway, p. 51-52.

Lehmann or Woolf, came from a class whose contacts with the actual world were incomplete.[84] Lehmann attempts to write about the actual, or the other, world when she describes the Wyatt family in "The Gipsy's Baby" or the sweep's children in Invitation to the Waltz. Although these passages are frequently comic or moving, they do not feel as believable as portraits of the upper middle class women that Lehmann so well depicts. Heroines, like Clarissa Dalloway, experience alienation and desire to connect, but like their creator are too far removed from the ordinary concerns of life as lived by most people. Describing Clarissa, Rachel Bowlby makes the following points which might apply to Lehmann's female characters, and to any number of contemporary heroines:

> Clarissa is both perfectly conventional in her role as lady and hostess and, at the same time, a misfit: Mrs. Dalloway is all about the fact that she is still unresolved in a choice apparently completed a generation before... Like Mrs. Ramsay, to all appearances a model of maternal equilibrum, she is in reality anything but "composed", except in the sense of being put together from disparate parts.[85]

Woolf attempts to reveal such feelings of isolation in Mrs. Dalloway when Lucrezia thinks, "to love makes one solitary".(33) Olivia and Lucrezia are not unlike in their predicaments. Their longings for their loved ones--who should be so close, and yet are

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[84]See, for one example, Jeremy Hawthorn, Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway": A Study in Alienation (Brighton: Chatto & Windus for Sussex University Press, 1975).

[85]Rachel Bowlby, Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) p. 93.

at times so distant--to utter any word of encouragement strike similar chords in the following two passages. As Septimus questions Lucrezia about the hat, she rejoices, although continuing to walk on thin ice with him, as she hopes against hope that he will remain in this state of mind:

> 'It's too small for Mrs. Peters,' said Septimus.
> For the first time for days he was speaking as he used to do! Of course it was--absurdly small, she said. But Mrs. Peters had chosen it.
> He took it out of her hands. He said it was an organ grinder's monkey's hat.
> How it rejoiced her that! Not for weeks had they laughed like this together, poking fun privately like married people.(216-17)

Earlier she had felt frightened of him, that "she could tell nobody, not even Septimus...."(33)

Similarly, Olivia feels the same isolation and distance from her beloved Rollo and is unable to control his actions any more than Lucrezia can control Septimus:

> He was wandering about all over the room. Restless. Something on his mind.
> Remember I love you. ...
> But less than a year ago these fragments flowed over from such richness and fullness that no emptiness existed, not one empty cranny.
> He went on pacing about, not coming near her.
> 'Darling, you must do as you like,' he said heavily...as if I were badgering him.
> Oh, stop walking about!... She slipped her hand through his arm as they went upstairs. Melt, melt, come close look at me, give me one kiss, then I can speak.(316)

Even when they are alone together making love Olivia is still not reassured, "thinking how one's alone directly afterwards".(154) It is then that she realizes one can be as isolated, or more isolated,

with another human being as one can by oneself. But when isolation arrives in the midst of love it is the most disturbing and shocking because of its very unexpectedness.

Olivia soon discovers that although she and Rollo both love each other, they each mean something different when they speak of love. Once when they are together Rollo whispers to Olivia:

> 'I love you.... You don't believe me, but it's true.'
> 'I do believe you.' [Olivia replies]
> Yes, it was true. It was only that the word love was capable of so many different interpretations. It could perfectly well be nothing to do with exaltations, with the lake and the chestnuts, or with going up the darkening cliff-face stopping to kiss, seeing the mauve sea below, hearing the gulls. For another person it could just as well be I do love you, you're so sweet, such a delicious person to be with and so attractive. We do make each other happy, don't we, darling?(344)

For Rollo love was their "lovely times," their lunches, their drives.... For Olivia, however, it was the substance of her life. But it is never allowed to be the substance of her life for obvious reasons, one of which is class. In The Weather in the Streets class again exerts its presence and is an isolating factor. It is made clear that Rollo is not for Olivia, even though he turns out to be, albeit illicitly. But because of this their love is always reduced to secrecy, and can never be shared among friends.

If class isolates Olivia, so too does her position as a woman in society, which is something that can be said about all Lehmann's female characters. While her heroines may never be as destitute as the Rhys-woman, Olivia comes close to this sense of total loneliness, around the time of the abortion, and of being a woman

cast out on her own. Like Olivia, Anna, in Voyage in the Dark, becomes pregnant and seeks an abortion. Yet where Anna, after being cast off by her lover, drifts from man to man, Olivia, it seems, will not become so pathetic, and will try to seek a life of independence first.

For both heroines, however, hope is one thing that keeps them going. At the end of the Voyage in the Dark when she has been seen by a doctor who tries to stop her hemorrhaging, Anna thinks about starting over again, going back to her childhood, and "about being new and fresh." Starting over again becomes a central concern for the for Rhys's women, in a far more extreme way than Lehmann's heroines. In Rhys's works the phrase carries a bitter irony. The doctor, while Anna is thinking of starting over again, says the same thing to her roommate, but his meaning is entirely different from Anna's. He means that she will be able to start the same dangerous cycle over again: the search for money, the going from one man to another, in short, prostitution. The juxtaposition of this phrase spoken by the two characters, Anna and the doctor, completes the bitter irony of the novel. Anna is suspended between her dream world and reality. Hope will keep her going, to be eventually replaced by the more natural instinct for survival. This is where Anna and Olivia differ. Where all of Lehmann's heroines live in both their dream worlds and reality, they do more than merely survive. Lehmann's female characters have tremendous wills, even when it seems they do not. While in Rhys's heroines the will

is gradually crushed, and survival, as they seek the protection of another male, becomes a way of life. Anna represents the genesis of the Rhys-woman. Most of the traits, including the tendency to drift from man to man, into a netherworld of escape, are present in embryo in her. Olivia, both as seen in Invitation to the Waltz and The Weather in the Streets, represents the typical Lehmann-woman,[86] exhibiting the need for a man (or love), but proving that when love fails, she is able to rely solely on herself.

Anna is not the only Rhys character similar to Lehmann's. There are others, for instance, Marya from Quartet, who like Olivia, receives temporary protection and security from her lover, but realizes at the same time that she will be discarded. But where Marya characterizes herself as a "naive sinner" justifying her own seduction and willingness to play the game, Olivia is much more innocent when she falls in love with Rollo--and is in it for "love". Marya is seen as a victim to Heidler, and sees herself as such. Yet with Olivia, never do we feel that she is, or thinks of herself, in such terms.

Olivia's isolation and feelings of being in limbo also have to do with a changing society. Although women of Olivia's (and Lehmann's) generation were supposedly sexually liberated, they

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[86]When I use the term "Lehmann-woman" (or "Rhys-woman") I do not wish to imply a homogeneity in Lehmann's (or Rhys's) character, but only that her characters share certain traits or predicaments which make it possible to speak of the Lehmann-woman. Lehmann was indeed able to create characters different from herself, as I hope I have illustrated above.

remained caught in the middle somewhere and restrained because of pre-war ethics, or disillusioned because of the idealized picture of romance the literature on which they grew up presented. Intellectually they were liberated, emotionally they were not.[87] Although Olivia realizes the position she is in and is even able to observe herself quite objectively, she understands she is trapped in her past in a way that the next generation will not be. On meeting her brother James at a party in London she thinks to herself,

> He's broken the mould entirely we were all cast in. Kate might have but she wouldn't--doubting herself and her rebellion, deciding the discipline of ordinary ways was best. I might have but I couldn't" meeting everybody half-way,...(357-58)

This sums up her situation and nature perfectly. It may perhaps be Olivia's fate as a post-war woman--for the other alternative to her position would seem to be to marry and produce children, much as Kate has done. She is caught, then, between the only two options available to women: the world of the avant-garde artist represented by Anna and Simon, or the much more suitable role of mother with children, represented by Kate, or in its highest form, Lady Spencer, the paradigmatic symbol of womanhood as well as of the Old

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[87]For example in Dusty Answer Judith believes that her lovemaking with Roddy will precipitate a marriage proposal from him, and is humiliated when she realizes his intentions are otherwise. Likewise, in The Weather in the Streets Olivia believes she can play the role of liberated "other-woman" and have a liaison with a married man purely for pleasure, but she cannot. She imagines she will be able to remain free from jealousy and possessive feelings as she does in the beginning of the affair, but this proves impossible for her as well.

Guard. Olivia is not either one of these types of woman, and therefore chooses neither. In her decision to opt for neither and for a life of independence, she is similar to one predecessor, Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's The Awakening(1899). Edna is contrasted with two other women in the text: Mme. Ratignolle comes to represent the concept of motherhood idealized and sentimentalized by late nineteenth-century American society; Mlle Reisz is tolerated and marginalised as the eccentric woman artist. Like Olivia, Edna finds neither of these roles satisfactory as her desire for artistic and sexual freedom grows to maturity. Edna is a woman who chooses death rather than submission to a marriage, and therefore society, which oppresses her creative and sexual drives. Because of her greater emancipation, Olivia fortunately does not have to endure such extremes in her rejection of what are ultimately the same things.

But women of Olivia's generation had different difficulties from late nineteenth-century women for another reason: the changing reality of the twentieth century--a reality that changed much more quickly than those of previous generations. They faced the difficulty of being liberated women (at least in relation to previous generations), but not having that concept mapped out for them. There was also the difficulty of sexual liberation for women. Virginia Woolf describes these problems, and the world in which she grew up, the Leslie Stephen world, in A Room of One's Own. The next generation after Virginia Woolf was Lady Brett Ashley's generation.

Woolf could sit, in the Bloomsbury days, and talk with Lytton Strachey about semen, but Brett could actually do it and talk about doing it. World War One changed reality for women, and everyone else, in this century. In previous wars some people died, in the Great War everybody died. A Farewell to Arms, Mrs. Dalloway, Testament to Youth give the message that no one gets out alive. The antidote, and what Lehmann is saying in her novels, is live. But for Lehmann, for Woolf, for Hemingway, after 1918 something profoundly important was missing and that was hope. Therefore it was not just the speed at which reality changed after 1918, it was reality itself that changed. Lehmann successfully evokes this sense of change and confusion, faced by women, over very twentieth-century issues in all of her novels.

Lehmann's novels are representative of the two sides of Lehmann herself. She lived a privileged early life, similar to that of the Curtises and Spencers, while her adult life was spent in the company of some of the greatest literary figures of the period including Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood and other avant-garde artists not unlike Anna and Simon in The Weather in the Streets. This divided nature of Lehmann's is seen throughout her novels. Olivia is not unlike the Lehmann who fell in love with and married Wogan Philipps. Lehmann, like many of her heroines, combines both radical and traditional elements of character. And she, like many of her heroines, was familiar with the position of the "other-woman." This

is another contributing factor to Olivia's feelings of isolation and belonging nowhere--that is, her chosen situation of the "other-woman".

Wherever Olivia ventures, her isolation is inescapable. At a party surrounded by friends she is still alone, "feeling depressed and lonely, there seemed so much hostility about, and suspicion".(179) In this instance, it seems that her friends buoy her up, but it is almost a superficial, unreal bolstering, where Olivia experiences (or feels she does) complete loneliness once her friends are gone, and as illustrated, even amongst them. Here Olivia begins to realize a universal truth about human isolation.

When not with Rollo she spends much of her time alone. During her pregnancy before the abortion she experiences a period of complete physical and moral isolation. She cannot turn to her parents for consolation, and Rollo is away in America. She longs to and contemplates telling Etty, but believes to do so would be a betrayal of her love.

> Go on, go on... [she thought]. She bit into her thumb. I won't. I can lie and lie; I can be alone.(239)

Yet again her love alienates her.

Before the abortion, she passes an extremely isolated period going to the park every day after lunch. Like Grace Fairfax, she is consoled by nature, but it is not enough to cure the permeating loneliness.

> Sometimes she found an empty bench, sometimes she and the others sat side by side in silence, occasionally someone spoke to her, and once started was unable to stop; the dam of isolation down, the spate let loose.(266)

One of the techniques used to express mental isolation in The Weather in the Streets is interior monologue. Examples can be seen throughout the novel, like the following passage when Olivia is at a party and suddenly simply can no longer bear it:

> I must go to Rollo. There were stumps and ash everywhere, and empty bottles and marks of dirty shoes, and a pool of something on the oilcloth by the lavatory door, and everybody still going through their dreary old paces. I thought: I don't want them. I'm superior. I've got someone of my own. I haven't got to stay.(183)

As mentioned previously interior monologue is a device Lehmann uses throughout all of her novels. It not only serves to let the reader into the minds of the characters, but also allows him or her to see two views: one objective, the other subjective, coming directly from the characters' thoughts. In the above passage the reader sees that Olivia is not superior at all, and that her love is serving only to help her momentarily believe she can escape, while in reality it only further estranges her.

Another technique that Lehmann employs in The Weather in the Streets is that of description of the weather, as the title itself would imply. The "streets" are symbolic of being on the outside of accepted standards, whereas "inside" of the street lies the comfortable accepted norm. Throughout the novel Lehmann portrays

rough periods between Rollo and Olivia by describing inclement weather, and cosy interiors are evoked when things become more smooth again. In the following example, with Rollo as her lover, Olivia can for once step away from the weather:

> Beyond the glass casing I was in, was the weather, were the winter streets in rain, wind, fog, in the fine frosty days and nights, the mild, damp grey ones. Pictures of London winter the other side of the glass--not reaching the body; no wet ankles, muddy stockings, blown hair, cold-aching cheeks, fog-smarting eyes, throat, nose... not my usual bus-taking London winter. it was always indoors or in taxis or in his warm car; it was mostly in the safe dark, or in half-light in the deepest corner of the restaurant, as out of sight as possible. Drawn curtains, shaded lamp, or only the fire....(145)

At the same time, however, an interior can be used to create a negative feeling within their relationship as the following description suggests: "The room was overpoweringly close, its former complex smell submerged beneath the single smell of oil lamp."(332) And Olivia's visit to Rollo's and Nicola's home only serves to make his life with Nicola more real, and to agonize Olivia all the more:

> 'Yes, it nice, isn't it? We knocked two rooms into one to make it.' [replies Rollo] That 'we' was rather painful. I saw them planning it, doing it together, to be a background for Nicola, pleased with it together, showing it off to their friends-[88]-(186)

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[88]This passage is similar to another in A Sea-Grape Tree when Rebecca, in the same situation as The Other Woman as Olivia, thinks to herself with bitter irony that the difference between marriage and the love affair is that "we." "We" is not the love affair.(34)

And:

> Yes, something began to change then.... Rollo had a nice house and a life of his own in it, and dependents, responsibilities.... I knew it after that.... The light was on in the dining-room, to the left of him--where he and she have their meals together and have well-dressed dinner-parties.(187-88)

However traumatizing the love affair transpires to be, throughout it all Olivia grows. It is after she realizes that she has lost Rollo, that she also comprehends the truth about her essential isolation.

> We are born, we die entirely alone; I've seen how it will be. To suffer such dissolution and resurrection in one moment of time was an experience magnificent enough in itself. It was far above the level even of the lake, the chestnuts. It should have no sequel.(330)

Olivia has finally discovered a kind of truth which seems to point toward mortality. She will have witnessed in her own life Simon's death, and understands that death is the ultimate isolating factor. However, as the above passage indicated and as Grace discovered, there also exist moments of redemption, however small. Olivia next thinks: "Everything went away again.... There it is: a fact in the world that must be acted on...."(330) But she never really acts. Lehmann's heroines do not always follow their creator's advice to rescue themselves from their own isolation.

Thus The Weather in the Streets continues the study of human isolation that reaches its epitome in The Echoing Grove. Even with her secondary characters Lehmann is illustrating the seemingly inescapable fact. Colin, for example, describes Simon to Olivia

stating:

> 'He was more completely remote than any one I've ever known,"[...] 'Nobody was to know him.[...]
> 'Wasn't he happy, then?' she said.
> 'Happy?' he cried as if astounded; as if no one in their senses could have asked that. 'Simon?'(373-74)

In The Ballad and the Source Mrs. Jardine is a heroine, or anti-heroine to some, who has tried to create, in her attempt to write a few novels, but this does not seem to have saved her. The strong and personable figure of Mrs. Jardine is paradoxically also a figure of supreme isolation. It is, however, Mrs. Jardine herself who is the cause of her own alienation from normal society, and she never ceases to remind Rebecca that the unconventional life that she, Mrs. Jardine, led, although alienating, was the "right" path to choose. She declares to Rebecca:

> As for those ignoble anxieties which rule the lives of most human beings--they have never touched me. The world is full of unhappy men and women who have feared the opinion of others too much to do what they wanted to do. Consequently they have remained sterile, unfulfilled. Now myself--once I was convinced of what was right for me, that was enough! I might suffer, but nobody could damage or destroy me.(26)

However, in following her "one true dark path", whether it is running off with the young man she loved or whether it is single-mindedly following her obsession to get Ianthe back again. Mrs. Jardine is destined to be isolated from those she most loves. Concerning her life with her husband she declares:

> there remained nothing but convention to keep us together. Convention is another name for the habits of society. When a habit is bad it should be broken. A bad marriage is the most detrimental, most vicious of habits--and one of the most difficult for a man or a woman to break.(110)

As the above quotation illustrates, she is an intelligent woman and far from being an evil person; she remains always true to herself and her beliefs, however out of touch with reality they become. It is precisely her quest to do what is right that leads her to obsession. Ianthe becomes her "idée fixe", Having those she loves love her in return becomes a necessity to her, so that when she is left unsatisfied she suffers all the more from loneliness.

The young and sensitive Rebecca, Mrs. Jardine's receptive listener, feels loneliness throughout the novel, but in a much less violent or insidious way than does her idol. Rebecca seems always to stand slightly apart from her contemporaries. For instance, at Gil's and Tanya's wedding feast, after Maisie has gone to retrieve the pudding, Rebecca thinks that, "after it the circle soon warmed up again and expanded in frivolity, leaving me out of it, eating Christmas pudding."(238) But it is precisely this somewhat lonely and shy disposition of hers that Lehmann creates intentionally to contrast with and magnify the powerful character of Mrs. Jardine.

On the one hand Mrs. Jardine is made to loom larger than life--a monster crushing and consuming people as Maisie sees her; on another hand, she is magnetic and mysterious, wise and wonderful, as Rebecca sees her. And yet, on still another she is pathetic and pitiable--her picture of final contentment is false, for she confesses to Rebecca, "I am so much alone--I speak so much to myself."(128)

The most alienated figure is not Mrs. Jardine, however, but

her current husband, Harry. Ironically, she is isolated even from him. Again, her insistence on doing what is right, in this case retrieving Ianthe, alienates her from her husband. She tells Rebecca, "... in a way I could not confide even in Harry. In a sense, Harry was too simple, too uncompromising a nature to take in what was involved."(139)

Harry isolates himself by both his silence and his drinking. He becomes even more cut off from others after the death of Cherry, who seemed the only person he really loved. In one sense Harry seems a victim of fate, but a victim because of his integrity, (and as a result he is not unlike his wife in her own striving for what she believes is right). Gil declares of Harry, "He's accepted what's happened to him in his own way, he doesn't compound with it."

In The Echoing Grove, written ten years later, personal isolation could easily be the main theme. Even though they retain contact with each other, the characters of this novel are ultimately each excruciatingly lonely, and are never able to transcend their misery.

The lack of any conventional, chronological time sequence, and the narrative technique of switching from the interior monologue of the characters' private thoughts to dialogue, serves not only to add to the novel's complexity, but also to enhance the general feeling of fragmentation or separateness of each character's life.

Each of the three protagonists experience loneliness; Rickie's

suffering is made more interior, his pain turned inward into drink and an ulcer. He has never had a successful relationship with another person. Even in his contact with day to day people there is always an element of distance and secrecy. Here again, a class distinction is evident. Rickie is presented as coming from an upper class family, while most of the other characters are middle class. This privileged birth, however, does not help Rickie, for he feel himself a "social pariah".

It is Rickie's inability to make a choice and decide between the two women he loves: Madeleine his wife, and Madeleine's sister Dinah, his lover, which ultimately isolates him. Madeleine and Rickie live for the most part as strangers, estranged from each other. When Rickie returns from a successful holiday with Dinah, Madeleine immediately thinks:

> It was all over. He was gone. She was alone with a stranger....(131)

Earlier in the novel he states to Madeleine,

> There's nothing. I'm nothing. That's what's happened. There's nothing; do you hear? I can't feel a thing. I'm done for. That's how it all ends--loving--and the rest of it.(84)

As well as his own emotional deadness, it is the nothingness of post-war civilization that he feels.

Rickie's life swings back and forth like this, opting to stay with his wife and family one minute, and in the next vowing to leave and run away with Dinah. His agony may be increased by the fact that he does have his own moral standards, what he calls

"trying to be good". At one point he says to Georgie, his friend's American girlfriend, "I hope I'll die before I start forgetting to feel uncomfortable."(242) Although he must have felt "uncomfortable" on numerous occasions, in relation to Madeleine he does, however, follow his advice, staying away from home because ostensibly he wishes not to be in the way. Ironically, Madeleine is later abandoned by her lover and left more completely alone than ever; for even when Rickie was less than a husband to her, he loved her and he was there.

Dinah, on the other hand, is more physically alone than her sister. Like previous Lehmann heroines, she attempts to lead a life of independence, but feels lost and without "an emotional focus." However lonely, she is not quite as tragic as the men with whom she is involved. Dinah tells Madeleine about one such man:

> I had the obsession once that I was the loneliest person in the whole world; but he cured me of that. He really was lonely--irremediably lonely, in the way pariahs are--pariah dogs.(301)

Even those characters who appear not to be so terribly alone are in fact just the same. Georgie, in love with Rickie but still apparently sound, feels she is an exile. During Rickie's last meeting with Georgie, he notices:

> as if he had touched, separated, and held it up before him, a core of isolation in her, a shape coldly illumined, contained, defined, like a dark crystal with a grain of incandescence in its heart.(202)

It is perhaps the recognition of someone as equally isolated as himself that brings Rickie to reveal himself finally to another

person. But three days after his night with Georgie, Rickie dies from a duodenal ulcer, and Georgie is killed by a bomb soon thereafter.

A Sea-Grape Tree, Lehmann's last novel, is similar to The Weather in the Streets in continuing the life of a heroine from a previous story. In this case, the protagonist is Rebecca from The Ballad and the Source, now grown up. Like the older Olivia in the sequel, the mature Rebecca seems to have changed for the worse, or at least to have fallen upon unhappy times. In the beginning of the novel she resembles the Rhys-woman with her lost identity, extreme loneliness and nearness to mental breakdown:

> Now now steady on, wrote the hand, come come keep smiling smile awhile this is called free association very therapeutic. What on earth is going on where am I who are they??? Come come no crying now take a deep breath it'll all come right I am so lonely nonsense nonsense stick to facts.(25-26)

Yet even though her despair is great, she never quite reaches the depths of despair that Rhys's heroines do.

In A Sea-Grape Tree isolation takes on obvious symbolic forms: the setting itself is an island, by definition separated from any mainland, and Rebecca's choice of name, Anonyma, functions to separate her from the outside world around her. By the time Lehmann wrote A Sea-Grape Tree, her heroine seems to have taken on many of the characteristics of those preceding her: she appears to be a composite of all the others. Although we never meet Rebecca's lover, echoes of Rollo are nevertheless evident in this married man (although this time with children), who has a life of his own,

quite apart from his love affair. Also similar to Rhys's heroine, Rebecca seems to need a man to "fix her". In this case the man is Johnny, after she has been left by the previous man.

Therefore, it is the heroine who, knowing the circumstances, once again chooses the life which will eventually isolate. In the beginning of A Sea-Grape Tree Rebecca is the Lehmann heroine at her most desperate and helpless. Again, it is love that isolates her, but it is also love that to her has the most meaning and importance in life.

Rebecca is fulfilled in love temporarily by the equally alone Johnny. Johnny has isolated himself by choice, preferring--because a paralyzing accident has left him feeling inadequate in the company of most people--to be on his own most of the time, and by the sea. Although Rebecca and Johnny love intensely and talk of a life together, it is not clear that, after Rebecca has left the island to have their baby, Johnny will ever really join her in England. James Gindin suggests that this may be the only illegitimate child born alive to one of Lehmann's heroines. He further suggests that "the potential ending seems a possibility achievable only imaginatively or historically".[11]

This appears to be true, for had Lehmann written the intended sequel Johnny would not have returned to England to join Rebecca. In the sequel Lehmann had in mind, Rebecca has gone back to England

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[11]James Gindin, British Fiction in the 1930s: The Dispiriting Decade (New York: St. Martin's, 1992) p.89.

and "ordinary life"; Johnny writes that he will come in one year, but doesn't. It is September 1939, and after months of silence, Rebecca searches out Maisie for news of the island. From Maisie she learns that Johnny has died, without warning, from a heart attack in Louis' arms. Hearing the news, Rebecca then gets in her car to find Sylvia, Johnny's love before he was wounded. On the island, Johnny had given Rebecca his medallion, having her promise that should something happen to him she would return it to his former love. Rebecca finds the cottage, sees Sylvia, but without speaking to her, slips the medallion through the flap of the letter-box. Driving back, she realizes suddenly, "But he knew he would never come back. He must have known even when he gave me the medallion."[90] There is no mention, however, of Rebecca's pregnancy or child by Johnny.

Once again, however painful the suffering may seem to be, not all is lost because one learns, or in the words of the ghost of Mrs. Jardine, "Nothing is lost...nothing of love is lost."(79)

It is true that nothing is lost when one loves, but as the preceding novels illustrate, love, even in the most profound states, does not always effectively combat loneliness. Wiktoria Dorosz writes that,

> in communion with another human being--as in love, or with nature--as in the moments of illumination, one can temporarily transcend the fundamental human solitude which, however, seems

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[90]Rosamond Lehmann, Rosamond Lehmann's Album, op.cit., p. 108.

to be inescapable in the long run."[91]

If being in love, or the contemplation of nature allows us only temporary transcendence of human isolation, our own salvation must lie somewhere, and this may possibly be the role of Art, and thus Lehmann's novels could be interpreted to illustrate. The act of creating may prove to be the only way to transcend the isolation of daily existence.

In A Note in Music Ralph Seddon struggles to grasp at truth:

> Truth is at the bottom of a bottomless well.... And this commonplace reflection gathered in one second such momentum, assumed all at once such overpowering proportions, swept him along so straw-like in its wake, that he felt that never in his whole life would he be able to seize, reduce, control it....(161)

What he fails to see is perhaps what Lehmann allows the reader to understand; that the only way "to seize, reduce, and control" basic isolation, or our lives in general, is through writing or creating. Lehmann's own life then is reflected in each of these novels, not, as most assume, in the form of Olivia or Judith, but rather in her attempt to "write out" her own isolation through creativity. If there is a further relation between isolation and war, besides the obvious, it is that the creativity that is opposed to isolation is also opposed to war's destruction. If mortality is the ultimate form of isolation, then the process of creating a work of art is an

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[91]Wiktoria Dorosz, Subjective Vision in the Novels of Rosamond Lehmann (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1975) p. 113.

attempt toward immortality and combating isolation.[92]

I hope the above has demonstrated how Lehmann's subject matter, as well as her treatment of it, has added something to twentieth-century fiction.

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[92]For more on personal isolation see Wiktoria Dorosz, Ibid., pp. 102-19.

The Inner Lives of Women

James Gindin writes that the language of the emotional, personal and sexual realm becomes a way of understanding the language of the social or historical. And,

> this method, often encouraged by the techniques, the confidence in an individual shaping consciousness, and the attempt to articulate interior experience directly in fiction which we sometimes too loosely associate with the modernism of a generation earlier than the thirties, is responsible for some of the decade's best fiction, its most cogent and involving metaphors that combine individual and historical experience, as seen in novels like those of Rosamond Lehmann, Elizabeth Bowen, Henry Green and, retrospectively, L.P. Hartley.[93]

Lehmann's attempt to articulate interior experience, in particular her depiction of the inner lives of her characters is directly linked to the above section on isolation, and will be linked in the following section to gendered identities, homosexuality and female friendships. Lehmann's turning inward to reveal the conciousness of her characters is one of the techniques that places her as modern in approach.

When examining Lehmann's depiction of her heroines, I will also consider the role of self, particularly that of the post-war woman, within society. It is because of Lehmann's depiction of

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[93]James Gindin, op.cit., p. 85.

women and women's sensibilities that Lehmann deserves a place among the pioneers of twentieth-century modern writing.

If Lehmann was not overtly political in her writing, it should have little bearing on the importance of her work in contributing to the twentieth-century novel. Her exploration of the minds and emotions of her characters was in part a reaction to her historical period. In the New Statesman John Lehmann described this change:

> There was, in fact, a change in the fundamental attitude to life, which was bound to show itself sooner or later in a new kind of writing. The desire to control the outer world waned rather sharply--if one can judge by the declaration authors made in articles and reviews -- and with it the confidence that the formula for Utopia was within everyone's grasp, and that it needed a simple act of the will to realize it .... There was a feeling that a great deal had been left out, that the trouble went far deeper than had been suspected, and that values needed to be thoroughly overhauled before one could hope to make a success of refashioning the world.[94]

Even more innovative authors, like Dorothy Richardson, tended to avoid the conspicuously feminist tone, displaying little interest in suffrage and similar issues. Some of the most influential women writers of the time remained aloof and showed little emotion concerning events.[95] There was, however, a growing awareness of the social oppression of women at this time, and this feeling is dealt with both implicitly and explicitly in the texts of the period. All

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[94]Quotation taken from Robert Hewison, Under Siege, Literary Life in London 1939-1945 (London: Macmillan, 1991) p. 204.

[95]For example of her most openly feminist book, Three Guineas, Virginia Woolf said that she regarded it no higher than a "good piece of donkeywork," and could not become emotional about it as with the novels.(A Writer's Diary, p. 288)

Lehmann's novels are concerned with the difficulty of being a woman in a world where men have made the rules.

Lehmann, like many of her contemporaries, was concerned with conveying the quality of individual, subjective and feminine perception, in what was considered at the time, the "feminization" of the novel. Lehmann's women are particular unto themselves in that they are all post-war women trying to be independent and liberated, but, much like Lehmann herself, clinging to the past in many ways. They are caught in the middle of an evolutionary process where the conflict arises between old expectations for women and their newly liberated selves. Her women face difficulty growing up for they are perpetually faced with the dilemma of conflicting needs: the need to please others, be they parents or lovers, the need to conform to society and the need to fulfill themselves. Often they fail at the latter. Judith, for example, represents the kind of liberated woman who emerged after the First World War, but she is continually confronted by the values of her mother's generation, with their accepted standards of femininity. Olivia, likewise, tries to live her life in a more free and independent manner than her parents, but is constantly aware of the traditional social structure that serves to thwart her. Grace has married, but because she finds herself unfulfilled, must resort to the fantasy land of her imagination for her greatest gratification. Lehmann is particularly effective in her rendering of the married state as less than fulfilling and in shattering the myth that this fairy-

tale offered to previous generations. Writers of the period began more and more to use the theme of dissatisfaction in marriage in their texts. In Vita Sackville-West's All Passion Spent (1931), Lady Shane realizes, only after the death of her husband, that she has wasted her life in an unrewarding marriage, and begins finally, much like Judith, Grace or Olivia, to live as herself and assert her individuality.

Lehmann's heroines are on the one hand the first generation of liberated women, wanting to break away from their mothers' or grandmothers' moulds. When adult Olivia, for example, first meets Rollo again on the train, there is an awkward moment when the question of who should pay for a coffee arises. Supposing herself to be a liberated woman Olivia refuses to accept his offer to pay and drops a shilling into his palm. In "Wonderful Holidays" Mrs. Ritchie, separated and a single parent, is another example of this "new woman". Maisie in The Ballad and the Source is also an example of the liberated woman in that she refuses to become tied down by the tired social roles expected of her and other women of her class, explaining she wishes not to marry and will become a doctor instead. Dinah in The Echoing Grove represents this new post-war woman in yet another way. She represents the liberated woman in her freedom to choose to or not to marry, though the reasons for her choices are different from Maisie's. Yet even with all this so-called liberation Lehmann's heroines are anachronistically drawn back by their "good upbringings." Even Dinah fundamentally cannot

escape her "upper-middle stock."

> I couldn't be more thankful for the good sound upper-middle stock I come of. It's meant a sort of ground floor of family security and class confidence that's been a great stand-by.(152)

And in The Weather in the Streets Olivia says to Kate:

> 'What we should have done was to live together for a bit... But you wouldn't have approved of that either, would you?'
> 'I shouldn't have cared what you'd done,' said Kate... 'The point is you wouldn't have approved of it. It's no good pretending you were so frightfully unconventional and free-lovish--in those days anyway.'
> 'Oh, no,' [Olivia] said finally. 'I was all for regularity. We were in love so we must be married. I never thought of anything else. I suppose one never gets away from a good upbringing.'(44-45)

Thus while Lehmann's subjects may be advanced, her heroines often remain innocents in the world around them, illustrating, in the same way that the presence of war did, a society in transition.

Lehmann manages to write on two levels, creating a greater depth to her novels. In A Note in Music, for example, although Lehmann writes frankly about homosexuality, Grace has no idea that Hugh is not the least bit interested in women sexually. Likewise in Dusty Answer, Judith is just as unaware of either of her two loves' sexual proclivities. Jennifer confirms Judith's complete sexual innocence, declaring before they part, "There are things in life you've no idea about... I always think of you as the most innocent thing in the world."(218) While not all Lehmann's characters are as naive as Judith, they do all seem to retain their traditional values and an innocence in the face of the modern world.

Lehmann's heroines all seek to define themselves in relation

to their society; and they all define themselves through love, therefore typically through men. Women who attain identity through love are evident in all Lehmann's fiction. In A Sea-Grape Tree Rebecca exclaims,

> I used to think the main thing in everbody's life was love. But it isn't: I found that out long ago. People can manage with only a pinch of it--if that. I literally can't. I cannot live without love: without--you know, being in a state of love. A loved and loving state.(125-26)

When reviewing The Weather in the Streets, Joseph Wood Krutch wrote that the book is "based upon the assumption that even for certain intelligent, sophisticated persons love can become the most important thing in the world, and upon the further assumption that the novelist may write about the passion of such persons in such a manner as to accept it at their own valuation".[96] Lehmann would seem to agree with this.

Love is a primary concern, as Simon Raven says in discussing The Weather in the Streets, "love between human beings is now the only thing; it must be followed wherever it calls, it will lead to hideous disaster, and this serves us right because we are unworthy".[97] Each novel effectively illustrates what Raven pointed out when he said that there is an implied question--"Was it worth it?" in all of Lehmann's works: "You didn't...you couldn't...win

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[96]Joseph Wood Krutch, "All for Love," The Nation, CXLII, 3 June 1936, p. 713.

[97]Simon Raven, "The Game That Nobody Wins: The Novels of Rosamond Lehmann," London Magazine, 3 April 1963, p. 63.

but you did have the ecstasy of the game: does this compensate you for the pain and humiliation of the ultimate defeat?"[98] Obviously in Lehmann's novels it does, but there is more. Sometimes without consciously knowing it, or realizing why they are, Lehmann's heroines go beyond love, to create.

If all her heroines seek love at all costs, when love fails them many of them turn to nature or to art. At the end of Dusty Answer for example, although Judith is left alone, the reader has the impression that she will make something of her life--through writing. May Sinclair's Mary Olivier is another example of this kind of woman, as she redirects her biological drives into creative ones.

Near the end of Dusty Answer, one again sees the artist come alive in Judith. Judith, abroad in France, suddenly asks her mother to go home: "sluggishly it stirred but it remained; she must go home, be alone, find work, write a book, something..."(208) This is a way that the self tries to take control and find unity and sense in the modern world.

Sometimes without realizing it Lehmann's heroines (Judith or young Olivia for example) are searching for self unity or a kind of identity. Like other characters (Mary Olivier) they find it difficult to separate their true being from the illusory one made up of connections with others--the self that is always in relation

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[98] Ibid., p. 61.

to something else. Olivia for instance is made up of many Olivias: the young girl from Invitation to the Waltz, the married woman, the divorced woman, the lover of Rollo. The closest we come to her "true" self is what we glimpse through her interior monologues. In The Weather in the Streets Olivia comes to realize how much colouration she takes from others, and how difficult identity is to find, when she states the following, which is also one theme of the novel:

> We don't know what we look like. We're just a tiny nut of self and the rest a complicated mass of unknown qualities--according to who's looking at us.(16)

Similarly, Mary Olivier terms this true self her "secret happiness" and it "had nothing to do with any of these [other] Mary Oliviers".[9] Her "secret happiness" is essential and the only possible way for Mary to achieve "being". While Lehmann does explicitly state this for Olivia, it is also implicit in the text and the reader sees it is true--and true not only for Olivia, but for all Lehmann's heroines. Lehmann's heroines all seem to want to "be true to their own selves," but being true to oneself becomes more difficult when that self is a multiplicity of selves--which might itself be part of the contemporary predicament for women.

The focus on identity and its complexities is evident in all Lehmann's fiction, from Dusty Answer where Judith must discover who she is sexually, emotionally and artistically, to Rebecca in A Sea-

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[9]May Sinclair, op.cit., p. 94.

Grape Tree. In A Sea-Grape Tree Rebecca, or Anonyma, is trying to sort out her own "discarded self" and trying to "establish an identity, tense with the efforts at all costs to conceal it."(9)

Throughout her life, it seems Lehmann, too, was looking for more than the dusty answer, while at the same time realizing there was no more. Until Sally's death meaning for her involved love or being loved, as her characters demonstrate. A year after C. Day-Lewis left her, Lehmann wrote a poem, "The Bay". The poem contains several natural metaphors, those things Lehmann treasured: the shore, the moon, the stars, cliffs (reminiscent of Olivia' and Rollo's walk in The Weather in the Streets). The poem seems to reflect Lehmann's lifelong feelings of isolation:

> and I alone
> Expecting no one, not expected:[100]

and the sense of once again losing at love. The last stanza reads:

> Yet on this verge I still behold
> A weightless imprint, less than shade,
> Starker than moon, as soft, as cold,-
> Eternal ghost, forever laid -
> Once, by a double image made.

But it also reflects Lehmann's theme of golden childhood versus empty adult life: "Time past; time found again; time dead."[101]

Lehmann's women strive to make sense of their adult lives, for the desire is to understand life as a unity of experience. If life

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[100]This is a feeling often felt by Lehmann and her characters. Compare with Rebecca's thoughts in A Sea-Grape Tree: "...expecting nothing, no one; not expected anywhere by anyone".(66)

[101]"The Bay," 1951, King's College, Cambridge. (See Appendix.)

must present change, and if pain is often a result of change, then let it have meaning. Lehmann's works continuously ask the question, what constitutes meaningful experience, and therefore validates life? She knew that the insistence of meaning hindered its chance of occurring. The title of Dusty Answer, taken from George Meredith's Modern Love, reveals this idea:

> Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
> They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:
> But they fed not on the advancing hours:
> Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.
> Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
> Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
> Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
> When hot for certainties in this our life!--[102]

Judith's tendency to look backwards towards childhood, combined with her uncertainty about the future is also evident in the lines of the poem. The prophecy here of the "fatal knife" will prove true in Lehmann's later works like The Ballad and the Source and The Echoing Grove, although her "deep questioning" is evident in earlier works.

Thus, while Lehmann's characters seem to be searching for some ultimate and concrete truth, Lehmann herself is showing, through her characters, the very elusive nature of absolutes and the impossibility of making such judgments.

The search for truth and certainty expressed in the poem, conflicts with the experience of the moment. Each of Lehmann's

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[102]George Meredith, The Poems of George Meredith, vol. II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) p. 145.

heroines find great joy in life, but they are isolated moments often connected with nature and must be understood as such. Yet each heroine ultimately feels life is worth living because of love, or because of these ephemeral, but beautiful isolated moments. In Lehmann's novels no love lasts, for passionate intensity replaces continuity.

Lehmann offers these transitory moments when a character has a flash of illumination as foils to the painful side of life. They are instances of clear insight into the reality of a situation, like revelations. Several examples have already been cited, but one of the best examples comes when Olivia sees the two swans and has a sudden, almost psychic knowledge that Rollo's wife is pregnant:

> "Look!"
> It was seeing too much. She turned away her head and looked at him instead.
> What's to come next?
> Oh, I see!... An illumination went through her, sharp, piercing and gone again; what I've been waiting for. All the pieces fell together... like the broken-up bits in James's kaleidoscope we used to look through, exclaiming at the patterns.
> "Oh, I see...." [...]
> We are born, we die entirely alone; I've seen how it will be. To suffer such dissolution and resurrection in one moment of time was an experience magnificent enough in itself. It was far above the level even of the lake, the chestnuts. It should have no sequel.(330)

This moment of being or seeing or knowing first happened to Lehmann in her garden, and she describes it in The Swan in the Evening:

> ... a sudden searching convulsion of my whole ground of being overtakes me in the garden. [...] I look up and see the moon quite high in the sky, a moon nearly at the full, singular in

> its lucence. I stop to stare at it. Then something extraordinary happens.... A flash... as if an invisible finger had pressed a master switch and floodlit my whole field of vision. At the same time the world starts spinning, and I am caught up in the spin, lifted, whirled. A voice splits the sky, splits my head.... And yet there is absolutely not a sound in the garden, not a barking dog, not a shunting train, not even a late robin;(61-62)

Both Richardson and Woolf employed similar moments of illumination, but these were different in that their moments reflected communion with the universe. Woolf seemed committed to that intense moment of being, of vision, which has been called the modern epiphany. In To the Lighthouse, after the dinner scene of communion over a steaming tureen of "boeuf en daube" ("a specially tender piece of eternity"), there is an instant like this. Both Woolf and Lehmann ask the question: but can such moments endure? The answer is no, except in memory and in art. Like Woolf, Lehmann shows the importance of transcending existence through art.

Gendered Identities, Homosexuality and Female Friendship

If Lehmann was not completely an innovator in terms of technique in the way Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf were, she was modern in her handling of sexuality. Lehmann creates in her novels an entirely feminine world, and sometimes, a world where the feminine perception is not seen in reflection to a masculine universe. I would next like to analyze her treatment of gendered identities[103] to reveal her texts' modernity.

In all Lehmann's novels, sexuality is a forceful current often just beneath the surface, but sometimes blatantly visible. Lehmann's heroines are modern in their querying the differences between male and female sexual experience. Norah MacKay thinks, "Really it was the first, the most important and interesting thing to know about any one".(274) Women in Lehmann's books are indisputably sexual beings and their sexuality is both explicit and

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[103]Note: I will use Robert Stoller's distinction about gender. Stoller writes that "'gender' is a term that has psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female,' the corresponding terms for gender are 'masculine' and 'feminine'; these latter may be quite independent of biological sex..." Robert J. Stoller, Sex and Gender: On development of Masculinity and Femininity (New York: Science House, 1968) p. 9.

described through metaphor. Water is often used to represent sexual energy. Judith expresses herself, and her barely formed sexuality, most completely when boating or swimming--particularly when swimming without clothing. It is in the river that Judith and Jennifer bathe together naked, and where Judith watches Roddy glide by in the canoe. It is also here that he sees her swimming naked, and where, on the island, they will make love. Later Judith's graceful, effortless swimming is contrasted with Julian's scrambling attempt to save himself from being carried over the edge. The contrast portends Judith's rejection of his proposal. The ways in which different characters move in water is used to illustrate painful contrasts, for example, in the following passage, between Mariella and Jennifer:

> Mariella splashed the water, hummed a little tuneless tune, laughed when a stone gave way beneath her foot and threw her headlong into the stream; and the bathing days with Jennifer returned to Judith with a pang. The body beside her now was like Jennifer's in height, strength, firmness of mould: and yet how unlike! This body seemed as unimpassioned as the water which held it.(243)

In The Weather in the Streets, Olivia and Rollo share a happy, sexually charged scene with Olivia's friends, frolicking in the water. But when they return to the same location, with their relationship faltering, it is dry and arid, and devoid of their past sensuality. The metaphors used to describe Johnny's and Rebecca's swim together as they are first falling in love, are also sexual:

> He swam far out, away from where she circled quietly just beyond the lantern's soft corona. Then back he came, she watched him, thrusting through the water with powerful strokes, his great shoulders looming as he came abreast of her and passed her without a word or glance.(71) [104]

In examining female sexuality Lehmann, like Lessing, took it a step further to the possible results, including pregnancy and abortion. Both Lehmann and Lessing used pregnancy to demonstrate the battle between the feminine will and the forces of nature. When Olivia tells Etty of her friend who is pregnant, Etty confides to her about her own pregnancy years ago exclaiming, "these physical processes are too treacherous. Why should wretched females be so beleaguered?" And Olivia thinks to herself, "That narrow miniature body, that, too, trapped, subjected to the common risks and consequences of female humanity."(238) Olivia's changing consciousness during pregnancy resembles that of Martha in Lessing's A Proper Marriage. Like Martha, she becomes increasingly involved with her own body and the sensations inside it. As Martha continually struggles to assert her individuality against the demands of her body, her perceptions change: "Martha noted that something new was happening to time."[105] She becomes divided: "She

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[104]Symbolic uses of the sea or rivers exist throughout all of Lehmann's works. For a thorough interpretation of water imagery and symbolism see Gillian Tindall, op.cit., pp. 143-58.

[105]Doris Lessing, A Proper Marriage (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954) p. 144.

was essentially divided. One part of herself was sunk in the development of the creature[...], with the other part she watched it."(121) In the same way as Martha, Olivia looses a part of herself once she begins her affair with Rollo. She can love him intensely, but feels love to be her only identity. She asks herself, "What happened to the person I was beginning to know before--"(144)

Yet while Martha will deliver her baby, Olivia aborts hers. Thus, it is the content of Lehmann's works--the mentioning of abortion and her treatment of homosexuality--that is modern. Even in 1936, abortion was still a taboo subject, at least in the Anglo-Saxon countries. The French version of The Weather in the Streets has a lengthy description of the abortion, that the English version censored.[106] Therefore, if Dusty Answer, for example, appears to be more modern and advanced than To the Lighthouse, which was published in the same year, its modernity is due expressly to its outspoken depiction of sexuality and gendered identities rather than to innovative techniques. Women, for the first time in the history of fiction, were describing their experiences as sexual beings. Sexuality is certainly implicit in Jane Austen, but never overtly accounted for in the way that it is in women's texts that emerged in the post-war years. Overt sexuality from a woman's point

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[106]See The Weather in the Streets, translated by Jean Talva, ed. London BNC: Paris, The Albatross, 1947. See also Tindall, op.cit., p. 76.

of view is portrayed in novels, for instance Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928), but one may find subtle differences between the man's description of a woman making love and a woman's description. Lehmann in particular wrote about sexuality from the woman's point of view, as well as about specifically female areas of sensuality, such as lesbianism, a subject which had previously been overlooked in literature. A feminine awareness was brought back to its connection with women's sexuality--to its physical as well as spiritual basis. As Rosalind Miles writes:

> For the first time [twentieth-century women writers] are challenging the long-undisturbed masculine versions of such events, whether that of "Fanny Hill", Frank Harris, D.H. Lawrence, or John Updike. Candid treatment of sexual topics is as old as man's sense of himself. [107]

She goes on to cite the physical detail in a passage from The Weather in the Streets stating that "few passages so clearly illustrate the historical movement towards more and more exposure of body and of sensations than this characteristically febrile extract":

> Then it was afterwards. He said, whispering:
> 'I'm your lover....'
> I thought about it. I had a lover. But nothing seemed changed. It wasn't disappointing exactly.... The word is: unmomentous.... Not wonderful--yet.... I couldn't quite look at him, but it was friendly and smiling. His cheek looked coarse-grained in the light of the lamp. I saw the hairs in his nostrils....(153)

As Judy Simons notes, Lehmann's work should be appraised along with other contemporary women artists, who, like Virginia Woolf,

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[107]Rosalind Miles, op.cit., p. 159.

were attempting to validate experiences that had previously been marginalised, and to establish a qualitative difference between male and female portrayal of social experience. They were sympathetic to the idea of an alternative literary past, working within but also forming an tacit commentary of the masculine hierarchy.[108] In A Room of One's Own Virginia Woolf wrote:

> Without those forerunners [Aphra Behn, etc.], Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer [....]
> For we think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. Lamb, Browne, Thackeray, Newman, Sterne, Dickens, De Quincy - whoever it may be - never helped a woman yet,[....] The weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully. The ape is too distant to be sedulous.[109]

Woolf also spoke of the difficulty women of the period had in writing from a feminine perspective, explaining:

> they are impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex. For though men sensibly allow themselves great freedom in these respects, I doubt that they realise or can control the extreme severity with which they condemn such freedom in women.[...] The obstacles against [women] are still immensely powerful--and yet they are very difficult to define. Outwardly, what is simpler than to write books? Outwardly, what obstacles are there for a woman rather than for a man? Inwardly, I think, the case is very different; she has still many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome[...][110]

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[108]Judy Simons, op.cit., p. 24.

[109]Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (London: Grafton, 1977) p. 63, 72-73.

[110]Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women," The Death of the Moth (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942) pp. 240-41.

Yet she concludes on an optimistic if uncertain note:

> You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men. You are able, though not without great labour and effort, to pay the rent. You are earning your five hundred pounds a year. But this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? These, I think are questions of the utmost importance and interest. For the first time in history you are able to ask them; for the first time you are able to decide for yourselves what the answers should be.[111]

But for the first time in history women were not only deciding their own answers, but writing about them. It is not surprising, then, that many women novelists of the period chose to see artistic continuity in terms of gendered models, as Lehmann shows in her reliance on the great Victorian women novelists rather than on the men.[112]

Jean Rhys, while claiming to resent the nomenclature of "a woman's writer," addresses one of the central questions that feminist criticism seeks to answer: what is the connection between women as material objects of their own histories and the representation of women in narrative? Rhys and Lehmann both use many interpretative devices of literature and their work is dense with allusions to contemporary and past English and French literature. In addition, most literary critics are now in general agreement that meanings do not lie directly in texts but in the

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[111] Ibid., p. 242.

[112] See Simons, op.cit., pp. 24-25.

interpretative strategies we agree to share to produce texts. Both Lehmann's and Rhys's texts are littered with a residue of literary effects designed to emphasize a literary thematics of romance.

For writers of the period, the war of course played an inevitable role. The First World War afforded both positive and negative changes. In its wake came a sense of futility and disillusionment. Yet it also transformed gender roles, changing relations between the sexes, and created new possibilities for women. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe how,

> the Great War temporarily dispossessed male citizens of the primacy that had always been their birthright, while permanently granting women access to both the votes and the professions that they had never before possessed. Similarly a number of these artists covertly or overtly celebrated the release of female desires and powers which that revolution made possible, as well as the reunion (or even reunification) of women which was a consequence of such liberated energies.[113]

Yet even with this liberating force, women were aware that a patriarchal society still existed and still controlled their lives. Lehmann's works subtly and effectively exhibit such a male-dominated society. Olivia, for instance, adapts her life to Rollo's whims; she has the abortion because "it wouldn't do [...] his children must be legitimate".(164) All Lehmann's women contrive to make the man's life easier, whether consciously or unconsciously. In a most prophetic episode near the beginning of the novel, Olivia is already adapting herself to suit Rollo's wishes when she uses

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[113]Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, op.cit., pp. 263-64.

her father's illness to smooth over their argument. Dismayed, Rollo says:

> 'I say, I'm most terribly sorry. Why didn't you tell me? How awful for you....' Such sincere sympathy, such a warm solicitous voice.... 'I do hope you'll find it isn't so bad.' 'Yes. Thank you. I expect he'll be all right. I mean--I feel he may be....' I've betrayed him to Rollo... to excuse myself, to re-establish myself in Rollo's favour.'(27)

Clues of this appear even earlier in Invitation to the Waltz when Olivia changes her views on foxhunting to please her dance partner:

> She ventured timidly:
> 'I wish I did. It must be such fun.'
> False. Denying acute feelings about foxes to curry favour.
> He said relentingly:
> 'Nothing like it. I'd rather have a good day's hunting than a week's shooting, any day.'
> 'Yes, I quite agree.'(210)

The situations in Lehmann's novels, however, are less male-dominated than those of Ivy Compton-Burnett for instance. Compton-Burnett portrays the excess of male tyranny as practiced in private by those with the public image of perfect gentleman. Rollo and Rickie would certainly be considered gentlemen, but while dominating almost unknowingly, conditioned from birth, they are also shown to be weak. Lehmann's works directly and indirectly address the masculine assumptions of her culture, but do not relentlessly interrogate it as Compton-Burnett so well does.

If there is an obviously typical Lehmann-woman,[114] there is also a typical Lehmann-man, though perhaps less well-conceived. Her lead men are often physically attractive (Rollo, Rickie). In A Sea-

[114]See footnote number 84.

Grape Tree Mrs. Cunningham describes Johnny as "Such a handsome chap he must have been, gorgeous! - well even now ... He puts me in mind of Gary Cooper."(12) But the men are unable to become as intensely or emotionally committed as the women. Often they are good lovers, but also often they are emotionally irresponsible. Rollo does not like being irresponsible, yet he does nothing to stop it. Rickie, too, experiences anguish over his own emotional irresponsibility as he expounds to Georgie on the night they spend together. But while he evidently suffers great pain and despair over his infidelity, he likewise does nothing to prevent himself. He tries to remember

> if he'd ever come across anybody known to have resisted a really strong temptation. Such people must exist, but he couldn't call any to mind: wouldn't care for them anyway, wouldn't feel easy...(100-01)

Lehmann's men are generally less sensitive than her women, and less able to articulate the boundaries of self and not-self. They also often appear to be competent and strong to the women initially, and then are revealed as disappointments. For example in Invitation to the Waltz, Rollo is

> the sort of person every one would want to call on in emergencies. His shoulders, his step and voice told them he knew what to do. He would cope, without fuss or self-importance. He was resolute. [Olivia] was filled with affection, with admiration for him.(284)

But in The Weather in the Streets Olivia finally recognizes him to be weak and basically without strong principles or beliefs other than those of preserving his class and pleasing himself.

Lehmann was not alone among post-war authors in searching for

suitable men who could complement her both intellectually and physically. Writers of the period such as Dorothy Richardson felt the gap between the sexes would narrow if men could learn to become more feminine in their thinking. Miriam expresses not only Richardson's but a whole host of twentieth-century women writers' views when she thinks:

> The thing most needed is for men to recognize their illusion, to drop, while there is yet time, their newest illusion of life as only process. Leave off trying to fit into their mechanical scheme a being who lives all the time in a world they have never entered. They seem incapable of unthinking the suggestions coming to them from centuries of masculine attempts to represent women only in relation to the world as known to men.[115]

Lehmann's novels deal with the reaction of intelligent and sensitive women to the disappointments of men, love and a world which has somehow not lived up to their young expectations. Her heroines struggle with finding a way of expressing sexual and creative desires for which there was no previous discourse. They also all seek to find unity for themselves and understand their historical role as women in a society very much in transition. In this way Lehmann's works form studies of women's search for self-understanding. And accompanying her heroines' search for self-understanding as well as self-unity, is also the means of making that self permanent. This feeling is largely connected to their experiences in love. The problem of femininity is closely linked

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[115]Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967) volume IV, Oberland, p. 92.

with the problem of self. The search for a sense of self and sexual identity is one of the themes common to women writers of the period. Clarissa Dalloway is one example of this new breed of woman in Woolf's novels who attempts to define herself as a woman by rejecting the male and retreating into her own interior world. Clarissa is married, but the union threatens to engulf her ego, a threat that is exemplified by the loss even of her own name when married. To survive, she must withhold herself, withdrawing progressively into a safe, protected world in her own home, living nominally within the institution of marriage but not subscribing whole-heartedly to it. She has deliberately chosen to marry Richard Dalloway rather than Peter Walsh because it was possible with Richard to keep a certain distance between them. Yet even now, she feels resentment at being made insignificant because of the merging of her identity with her husband's. She is no longer Clarissa, but Mrs. Richard Dalloway:

> But often now this body she wore... this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing--nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now; but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.[116]

Lehmann's women are slightly different in their "rejection" of men. They reject men, but frequently only after they have been rejected and have learned the hard way. There is Judith who at the

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[116]Virginia Woolf, op.cit., p. 14.

end of Dusty Answer chooses to live on her own for a while. There is Olivia who seems to echo these sentiments as well at the end of The Weather in the Streets. There is Mrs. Jardine who will live alone after lovers and society reject her. And there is Rebecca in A Sea-Grape Tree who rejects everything, until she finds hope and love again in the form of Johnny--thus beginning the cycle over again as will probably Judith and Olivia. Therefore, these women's rejection of men is not at all total. They seemingly reject men only because they need them so much.

They are all, then, very much in a state of flux, as is their society. Dinah, more sexually and intellectually advanced than previous Lehmann-heroines, sums up this feeling as she states in The Echoing Grove that:

> I believe we are all in flux--that the difference between our grandmothers and us is far deeper than we realize--much more than the obvious social economic one. Our so-called emancipation may be a symptom, not a cause... It's more than the development of a new attitude towards sex,... a new sex may be evolving--psychically new--a sort of hybrid. Or else it's just beginning to be uncovered how much woman there is in man and vice versa.(311-12)

And in her review of The Echoing Grove Elizabeth Bowen writes:

> What is wrong--or is something in Nature changing? Change in women as women, in men as men, in their needs, in their efficacy for one another, is the suggested answer--even, the submerged theme.[117]

Lehmann's women long for marriage and happy endings, for this is the only model on which they were raised. But, as Lehmann shows,

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[117]Elizabeth Bowen, "The Modern Novel and the Theme of Love," op.cit., p. 19.

happy endings are nearly impossible in love with its modern difficulties. Happy marriages are rarely shown by Lehmann as being an attainable goal. Thus it is in this way perhaps more than any other that Lehmann demonstrates a distinct departure from her nineteenth-century predecessors.[118] Whereas many of her predecessors' works ended happily in matrimonial fulfillment, Lehmann's novels are decidedly modern in that there is no fulfillment or reconciliation at the end. She implies that passionate love can exist only beyond the bonds of marriage, only when it is obvious that it can never be permanent. The intensity of love that Lehmann's heroines experience and continuity are always presented as mutually exclusive, just as sexuality and childbirth are seen as contradictory. Passionate love in Lehmann's novels reaches an intensity of extreme happiness, yet always ends in tragedy. Olivia and Rollo, Ricky and Dinah, Ricky and Georgie, Judith and Roddy, Mrs. Jardine--nowhere does love last. When marriage does last it is portrayed as unexciting and provincial as

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[118]By the late nineteenth century writers were beginning to uses themes of dissatisfaction in marriage that Lehmann and her contemporaries took a stage further. An obvious example is Edna Pontellier in The Awakening who gradually becomes aware of the subtle manner in which marriage is oppressing her need for growth and, one night after arguing with her husband, she begins "to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul". Edna is an example of a precursor to this new woman in her experimentation of sexuality and desire. But as the ending of the novel indicates, she cannot live peacefully with her decisions, as presumably Olivia can.
Kate Chopin, The Awakening (Chicago & New York: Herbert S. Stone & Co., 1988) p. 81.

between Tom and Grace, Norah and Gerald, Ricky and Madeleine, or Kate and her husband. Olivia sees Kate, her sister, as

> the wife of Dr. Emery, living an ordinary middle-class family life, valued, successful, fairly contented. One saw her life running, peacefully, unsensationally now on its course, right on to the end; and why did this make one want to cry? Kate isn't wasted; but there should have been something else...(258)

The impression is that Kate's life is over, that it will never go beyond what it is now, while Olivia divorced and childless, still has a future, an adventure before her. Rarely is sexual passion a part of the husband and wife relationship. Image upon image display this: The geranium that Judith plucks is symbolic of both her mother's unreality to her child and the distant relationship between her parents, and Judith realizes the flower "was not real after all: it was made of pink velvet".(227) Whereas when the passionate relationships between the cousins and Judith or Judith and Jennifer are suggested, the images are not artificial, but natural and alive, and often sexual. On the night of Judith's tryst with Roddy, she notices the

> roses were open to the very heart, fainting in their own fragrance; [...] Forms, lights, colours vibrated, burned ached, leapt with excess of life.(254)

This points to another distinction separating Lehmann from her contemporaries. In Dusty Answer as well as succeeding novels the young are on centre stage while parental figures remain dim and very much in the background. In contrast, in the works of Virginia Woolf, Ivy Compton-Burnett or Elizabeth Bowen grandparents,

relatives and especially parents play primary and significant roles. Judith's mother, the Curtis parents, and the Spencers exert influence over the children, but the emphasis nevertheless remains on the young. Even in The Ballad and the Source, where the central figure is Mrs. Jardine, the significance is with the young. Dorothy van Ghent describes the novels as:

> peopled with the Bright Young Things of Evelyn Waugh's satires of the period, a world where tradition has largely been discarded as outdated by the new generation, and the young are conscious of themselves as taking over a new, freer post-war society.[119]

Each of Lehmann's women is seeking love at all costs but in each case the love fails, except to bring suffering, almost as if it were doomed from the start, and as if each heroine expects this to be its outcome. Many of Lehmann's heroines are but successors to nineteenth-century heroines (Isabel Archer, Dorothea Brooke, Elizabeth Bennett). But one enormous difference is that, whereas Judith's and Olivia's predecessors all end by marrying the men of their desire, rarely are Lehmann's characters fulfilled by romantic love. Perhaps the love in Lehmann's novels is foiled because it is a product of the times. Gillian Tindall proposes that it is the war that is partly responsible for this, for not only had it killed off many of the men who would become eligible husbands, but also it had killed "faith in the nature of permanence as well".[120]

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[119]Dorothy van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Reinhart, 1953) p. 42.

[120]Gillian Tindall, op.cit., p. 33.

While it would seem less likely, another reason for the failure of marriage might have been a reluctance on the part of women to continue to perform in traditionally wifely patterns. In all Lehmann's female characters one sees evidence of rebellion, but then at the same time they are all seeking love and marriage. The dilemma that many of Lehmann's heroines have is because they are perceived by themselves and others as having only one goal in life, marriage. Characters like Olivia or Mrs. Jardine expose the hypocrisy of a society that places marriage above all else. In order to maintain the appearance of respectability they are forced into marriage, or forced to believe they need to be married.

Connie in Winifred Holtby's The Crowded Street faces emotions similar to Lehmann's characters. In her desperation to ensnare a husband (believing that any man was better than none), Connie uses the sexual freedom that wartime conditions created, and becomes pregnant by an inappropriate man. Ostensibly she blames her mother, but her reproach is actually against the system her mother supports:

> And you wouldn't let us work, or go away or have any other interests, because you were afraid of our spoiling our chances of a good marriage. And if we didn't get partners at dances, we were beastly failures. And if our friends attracted more attention than us, they were sent away. And it was all because of our healthy homely influence, wasn't it, mother? And now that one of us has taken the only means she saw to fulfil your wishes and get married, you aren't sorry, and if I'd been successful, you wouldn't have been angry, would you,

mother?[121]

The passage elicits some of the feelings the reader might have reading Invitation to the Waltz or The Weather in the Streets. But Lehmann makes a less harsh statement on the entrapment of matrimony. For Holtby, entrapment and constriction are seen as central elements in her view of marriage. Ultimately the power of family and society is too much for Connie; she marries but courts disaster by her rash behaviour and finally dies of pneumonia. At the riverside in the rain when she is contemplating suicide she says to her sister, Muriel: "It wasn't as if I hadn't tried other things. I wanted to chicken farm, I wanted to go away and just do anything. But mother wouldn't let me. It was just men, men, men, and make a good match."(199)

In The Crowded Street Muriel is free to realize her selfhood only when she declines a proposal in order to continue her autonomous single existence--much like Judith or Olivia, but their actions are less conscious. Like Lehmann, Holtby does not propose happy marriage as a possibility. The prospectively ideal marriage of Delia and Martin Eliot, with each representing each other's intellectual and professional needs within the union, is ultimately destroyed by his death.

Doubt that equal partnerships between the sexes can exist is ubiquitous in Lehmann's fiction. Usually women tend to be active

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[121]Winifred Holtby, The Crowded Street (London: Virago, 1981) p. 152.

and men reactive rather than vice versa (Rollo and Olivia, Roddy and Judith, Rickie and Dinah).

Another distinction between Lehmann and her predecessors is the very fact that she attended university. Her years at Girton are an important consideration in relation to her place among male writers of her generation. With them she shared the special experience of the university, denied her predecessors as well as even many of her contemporaries. Therefore, writing of the university experience with a freshness and female sensibility marked Lehmann as one of a new generation of writers. Ivy Compton-Burnett's Pastors and Masters (1925) is more strictly a campus novel (a literary genre that did not become recognizable as such for another quarter of a century) than Dusty Answer. But where Lehmann's focus is entirely on the young woman's experience at college, Compton-Burnett's is on the man's. The male-dominated, old boy network that Compton-Burnett so well describes nevertheless left its mark on Lehmann's fiction. In Dusty Answer Judith believes Roddy and Tony are against her:

> The voices came up to her again, like a reiterated warning. 'Keep away. you are not wanted here. We are all friends, men content together. We want no female to trouble us.'(113)

Then returning to Cambridge after she has graduated, she thinks,

> Trinity Great Court grieved in the sun for Martin. It had not yet quite forgotten him. It did not like its handsome young men to die.(350)

And:

> *Under [Cambridge's] politeness, it had disliked and*

> distrusted her and all other females; and now it ignored her. It took its mists about it, folding within them Roddy and Tony and all the other young men; and let her go.(354)

Lehmann's predecessors' (Edith Wharton, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Kate Chopin) heroines were never confronted with the questions and problems that afflicted the post-war generation. Lehmann's heroines reflect this generation with their persistent questioning of old-fashioned moral values, the impermanence of relationships, and supposed equality between the sexes. The changes Judith, and particularly Olivia, go through in their development constitute an awakening to the nature of their desires and to the fact that society as it exists, cannot accommodate them. Where the suffocating nature of such social constraints and their effect on the development of the artistic mind are, for her predecessors' heroines, often conveyed by images of enclosure, with the exception of The Weather in the Streets, Lehmann's images for social constraints are of natural and outside objects.

While outwardly conventional, Judith expresses Lehmann's own uncertainty about accepted modes of behaviour. However, with the exception of Dinah and adult Olivia, not one of Lehmann's heroines could possibly be described as radical in her actions; it is, however, the heroines inner expression and response to events that suggest their knowledge of their own limitations and a longing to escape from restriction. What results from these feelings of restriction is an uncertainty and anxiety about how the twentieth-century woman is expected to behave, especially in regard to

women's sexual or emotional direction. This uncertainty often leads to an androgyny, with the woman wishing to be strong like the male, while still preserving feminine qualities sought after by the male.

Many of Lehmann's female characters (Judith, Olivia, Rebecca, Mrs. Jardine, Maisie, Dinah) are androgynous in terms of their breaking away from the moulds of their parents and previous generations. These are also women who are shown as having brains of their own, and not necessarily relying on men to support them. In comparison, many of Virginia Woolf's characters (Clarissa Dalloway, Lily Briscoe, Sally Seton) similarly exhibit this "androgynous" mind, and the blurring of some of the rigid categorizing of feminine and masculine capabilities. Lily Briscoe's androgyny is portrayed as the reflection of the ability to use both of the capacities traditionally assigned to "female" and "male": intuition and reason. Lily realizes that her paintings will probably never sell well, but this does not matter, for she paints not to sell her art, but in an attempt to achieve a kind of self unity through the creative process. It is her struggle for artistic vision that becomes foremost in the novel. In trying to complete her painting she is attempting to resolve the conflicts she feels about the Ramsays, as well as relationships between the sexes in general. But in painting, Lily is pursuing something that is not only considered unimportant by Mrs. Ramsay--Mrs. Ramsay "cared not a fig for her painting"--but also something considered by the male enterprise as

being not the domain of women. Lily must both embrace Mrs. Ramsay's creative vision and renounce the gender stereotyping which prevents women from expressing that vision through art. In a characteristically male remark, Charles Tansley tells her that women can't paint or write.

Lily and Olivia are representative of the woman who acts one way for the man, while often intellectually realizing and consciously thinking the contrary. Olivia's emotional responses differ from her conscious rationalization. As mentioned above, Lehmann explored not only male and female deception, but also self-deception. For example, while Olivia wants her relationship with Rollo "to be forever", she also wants to be for him as he wants her to be, thereby deceiving herself and him. Since he loathes scenes because emotional complexities perplex and discomfort him, Olivia simply pretends she is "content with half a share".(194) In the midst of their first argument she comforts him: "'Don't worry, I <u>am</u> all right. It doesn't matter,'" for "it was agony for him, the whole thing, poor boy."(195) And to herself Olivia thinks, "I'd promised I'd never complain or make a scene again; I never have. The Other Woman mustn't make too many demands".(201) What emerges here is, not only that Rollo is unwittingly dominating Olivia (see above), but also that there is an implicit contrast between the nature of men and the nature of women: men run, Olivia says, but "women prefer to stick around and make something happen".(335)

Likewise, Lily's attraction to Paul Rayley is only revealed in

quick flashes when images from a deeper level of awareness break into her consciousness. Unlike Olivia, however, Lily's desire for Paul is the most feminine part of her. The rest of her feelings remain a mixture of longings and resentments, for the most part ambivalent. She reacts to Mrs. Ramsay with both hostility and strong attraction. She is glad she triumphed over her by not marrying, as Mrs. Ramsay believes an unmarried woman has missed the best of life. Yet Lily stills worships Mrs. Ramsay and longs to connect with her:

> Could the body achieve, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart? Could loving, as people call it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired....[122]

In this way not only Lily's longing for the ideal of femininity that Mrs. Ramsay represents, but also her equivocal bisexuality are revealed to the reader. Her androgynous feelings are depicted in several ways. The best example of it is her capacity for imaginative identification with the mind of a man. She can see "through William's eyes" and understand how he loves Mrs. Ramsay, not by guessing but by understanding her own love for the woman.

The closest character Lehmann has to Lily Briscoe is Anna in The Weather in the Streets. While Anna does not show any signs of bisexuality--firmly committed to Simon, she does exhibit an artist's androgyny in the same way as Lily, exercising both her

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[122]Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927) p. 79.

feelings and her judgment.

Yet for Clarissa Dalloway it seems that she can only experience total physical passion with a woman.

> yet she could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl... she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed.But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over--the moment.[123]

Bisexuality is a conscious element in Clarissa's mind, whereas in Lehmann's characters' it seems less so. Both Woolf's and Lehmann's concept of the androgynous is especially important in its connections with the process of artistic creation. But for Woolf the complete realization of feminine sensibility is not the final goal as it is for Lehmann. Both Lehmann and Woolf employed this "moment of knowing", but for Lehmann this is part, and an accepted part, of the feminine consciousness, for as Olivia says to Rollo concerning the swans:

> [Rollo asks] 'How did you guess?'
> 'Oh.... I have visitations, you know.... Messengers from the beyond to lay bare mysteries.... Voices and great lights.'[...]
> 'I can't explain,' she said. 'Everything fell together.' The moment when the catch slips at last and the jack-in-the-box flies out. 'Watching water always makes me psychic.... There was a sort of annunciation--by proxy.' She laughed. 'Most

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[123]Virginia Woolf, op.cit., pp. 46-47.

> extraordinary. Women do sometimes seem to appear in a sort of foreshadowing aura of pregnancy. I've never known it happen to an expectant papa.'(334)

But for Woolf, feminine consciousness is explored as part of reality, but the ultimate reality can only be perceived by going beyond it. Only in the highest form of creativity, in which there is a moment of vision caught and eternalized in form, is universal consciousness achieved. And there distinctions between sexes must disappear. Only the androgynous is capable of this fullness of vision.[124]

Lehmann saw the difference in male and female development and wrote about the way social expectations and personal resolutions for women diverge from those of men. "It was unusual," Lehmann said,"for girls of [her] class to have careers.[125]" Likewise it was unusual for girls to attend university. She did both, but there was the resulting ambivalence attendant on defying convention that many of her heroines exhibit. Grace sums up the expectations, implicitly condemning the standards for and education of young girls:

> I was brought up to believe in matrimony,...and monogamy, and pure womanhood waiting for pure love to come and lead it off to a pure home. A spade was called--anything but a spade. I was a very slow developer.(248-49)

Writing from a woman's perspective about a woman's experience,

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[124]See Sydney Janet Kaplan, op.cit., pp. 76-109, for more on Woolf and androgyny.

[125]Philippa Toomey, "Just One More Book," The Times, 1 July 1981, p. 9.

Lehmann constructed novels of awakening, works that consider a woman's pattern of development. Her works correct the singleness of vision, even as her writing responds to and speaks from the cultural and intellectual spirit of her times.

Lehmann challenges, first, that society validates the man's transgressions, and, second, that the burden of responsibility falls on the woman. In The Weather in the Streets for example, Olivia is seen as a seductress, and Rollo the victim. Although society permits him both his wife and his mistress (as long as he follows the social code, in assuming responsibility for his legal relationship, by covering his tracks), Lehmann makes it clear that innocent ignorance is not exculpatory, either on the personal or the social level.

As in A Note in Music, The Weather in the Streets distinguishes between male and female weakness, mocking the latter while defining the causes of the former and protesting against them. But in contrast to Tom's conspicuous weakness in the earlier novel, Rollo appears outwardly and physically stronger. Everyone, the entire social order, props Rollo up and conspires against his knowing his own fragility. Lady Spencer, his own mother, calls him weak, and it is around this point that she obtains Olivia's tacit agreement to release him. Even Olivia herself thinks, "Nobody could say Rollo was a victim.... Except that he's a bit weak and in a muddle."(145)

Lehmann also portrays Ivor, Olivia's ex-husband as childish

and inadequate, though kindly, conveying in all these characterizations the inter-war conceptions of a weak male. Yet since Lehmann is delineating female self-definition through love rather than male-definition through politics, she concentrates on a different social issue: the problem for a woman of Olivia's sensibility is a combination of inadequate men and society's protection of them at her expense.

The problem is also her sensibility. While she is educated (Olivia went to Oxford, Lehmann went to Girton) and liberated, this "new" woman, coming of age between the wars, played the old game, desiring permanence in a relationship, particularly because of the common perception of social disintegration. If Rollo plays the male game according to the old rules, Olivia plays the female game when she masks her jealousy and resentments. She conceals her feelings not only because they would distress him and they are belittling emotions, but because she has pretended both equal satisfaction, and that she could experience a sexual relationship in the manner of men. But in fact she cannot tolerate the role of the other woman, as is indicated when she says with bitter irony: "a husband may stray but home ties are strongest, and if you hang on he'll come back. It's the Other Woman who gets had for a mug."(336)

As Ruth Seigel writes, Lehmann suggests that Olivia and Rollo betray

> each other's innocence, but because of Olivia's self-consciousness and ability to see around things, she understands this fact of betrayal. Also, because the course of their love neither absorbs nor recreates Rollo, he strides across the novel unchanged by events while love consumes and strengthens Olivia. Her journey through love is similar to the journey of the male hero of the thirties to the frontier.[126]

The frontier being, according to Bernard Bergonzi:

> an aspect of the subjective and inner landscape.... a metaphorical division between states of feeling, between known and unknown, present and future, the small group and society.[127]

Disparate as love and politics are, Lehmann's handling of her subject reflects anxieties that are similar to those of her male counterparts. She is concerned about responsibility and about subjective experience--what it means to be a man, and what it means to be a woman at that time. Her question is how conflicting male and female strength and weakness, in conjunction with the ethics of society, converge on sexual love.

Rollo's masculine and upper class authority, on the one hand, offers safety, yet on the other, emotional entanglement threatens him and, by extension, society since it counts on his solidity to preserve its institutions. Olivia is as overtly weak in her yielding dependency and need for love as Rollo is socially strong, but she is not fragile as he is. She aligns herself with her sister, her mother, and his mother in unquestioningly assuming the

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[126]Ruth Seigel, op.cit., p. 113.

[127]Bernard Bergonzi, Reading the Thirties: Texts and Contexts, (London: Macmillan, 1978) p. 66.

guardian role. She exhibits a toughness deeper than her vulnerability and shows her ability to endure and survive. But her readiness to accommodate pain for herself, and to pity Rollo demonstrates how she perpetuates social mores and illusions. Thus in doing so, she also perpetuates the woman's submission of self in romantic love. This may be in part why The Weather in the Streets was so popular among women; its powerful evocation of the way in which so many women experience this kind of love rang as true for women of the period as it does today.

Thus, one finds women in Lehmann's novels who "pay" by subordinating themselves to oppressive men or boring husbands. Along with these women's acceptance of their natural sexual function, as lovers or mothers, one sees a submissiveness and a sense of self-sacrifice. This is particularly true of the female characters who are mothers. Encroachment upon their freedom by responsibilities of their families, or demands of their husbands, inhabits a large place in their awareness. In Invitation to the Waltz Mrs. Curtis is an example of the women who gives all her energy to her husband and family:

> Mrs. Curtis wore, over her black dress, a black chiffon scarf embroidered with gold sequins. She knitted. To-night it was stockings for James. To-morrow night another kind of wool would be wound, another work embarked on. Now and then her hands dropped in her lap and she sighed--a long sigh, unconscious, profound; and each time, hearing it, her daughters felt uneasy; wondering from what depth issued a symptom so contrary to her nature. For though they told themselves it was only an irritating habit, it sounded each time so terribly like the sigh of one afflicted, bearing up beneath some secret burden of knowledge: as if, though the

> world imagined her impregnable, she knew herself undermined; as if, instead of sailing on majestic, invulnerable for ever, she knew she must sink soon, die, say, of heart disease; but meanwhile she would do her duty, keep silence as long as she could, let no shadow fall upon her dear ones.(112)

As well as women who subordinate themselves, there are also women who pay by giving in to their sexual drives outside marriage and are punished by society. There is Judith and there is Olivia, but the most powerful example of this is Mrs. Jardine. When Sibyl Jardine abandons her child, however temporarily, to run off with her lover, she is forever ostracized by society. The demands upon "the source" that is, upon the maternal figure, are at odds with individuality. Mrs. Jardine's rejection of her child is followed by the birth of her ardent feminism. But she is divided between her guilt and obsessive longings for her daughter and the demands of her own individualism. While she is the most outspoken feminist in Lehmann's fiction, in some ways she still remains moored to a traditional, patriarchal value system. Lehmann's other characters express the problem of being a woman with less hostility and more resignation. And some appear to have accepted the submissive role in one way or another.

Yet they are all women in a world dominated by men and masculine values. Thus, corrupt as Mrs. Jardine may appear, one senses that the corruption has grown out of her early recognition of the unfair relationship between men and women, and the development of a defensive egotism within her strong enough to

allow her to break away from what is expected of her. She tries to give her hope to Rebecca and tells her:

> One day, Rebecca, women will be able to speak to men--speak out the truth, as equals, not as antagonists, or as creatures without independent moral rights--pieces of men's property, owned, used and despised...."(106)

Born into the same male-dominated, pre-World War I society that Mrs. Jardine rebelled against, Rebecca will grow up in a world where the differences between the sexes have narrowed. Like Judith, Olivia and Dinah, her years of maturing are post-war. All of Lehmann's heroines, in fact, experience difficulties with the opposite sex because of the wide disparity between what they were brought up to believe in as femininity or masculinity and the real conditions of modern life. They are caught up in a feminine sensibility that relates only to an old reality.

I will compare Lehmann's works again to those of May Sinclair, for Sinclair appears to have influenced Lehmann. In the novels of Sinclair, there is almost always a character who gives up the chance for self-fulfillment in order to help someone else. In Lehmann's novels this happens, but also the reverse often happens to an equal extent, almost as if she were rejecting, or struggling to reject, this predicament of women. Her protagonists decide to act independently and for themselves and their own fulfillment, even if their actions often do not prove to bring them happiness. It is often the secondary characters (Nora MacKay, Mrs. Curtis) who frequently are not allowed this new-found freedom.

In Sinclair's novels, women even remove themselves from sexual relations altogether in order to realize a more noble ideal, giving up a lover to someone else, a sister or friend. Harriet Frean gives up her lover to her best friend, and Gwendolyn gives up hers to her own sister in The Three Sisters.[128] Or, as in The Judgement of Eve,[129] the woman is destroyed by too many childbirths, implying that a woman has no power in controlling the sexual drives of her husband.

Awareness of the feminine condition often comes to women at an early age. Both Olivia's and Mary Olivier's awareness grow partly out of how they are treated because of their sex, and how their sexual feelings influence their thinking. One can see jealousy on the part of Rebecca Ellison over her family's apparent partiality to the baby brother called simply, Boy. In The Ballad and the Source Rebecca and Jess are dismayed at their treatment as girls in the family, when Tilly leaves her entire legacy to their brother:

> We did not like to mention that we had been pierced with a sense of incredulous outrage and indignation on hearing that our infant brother had acquired a fortune overnight. We were so much as mentioned in the will? We were not. He, Boy, sprawling at ease, without a care or conscience in his perambulator, had casually tossed in the claim of male superiority and bagged the lot. Sylvia had voiced the feelings which our own years forbade, or took at least the sting from, when she bitterly remarked, the morning the news broke: 'I bet I was never called Girl when I was a baby!'(211)

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[128]May Sinclair, The Three Sisters (New York: Macmillan, 1914).

[129]May Sinclair, The Judgement of Eve (New York: Harper, 1908).

Likewise, in Mary Olivier's family, she is the only girl in a family of three boys, and her first conflict stems from her jealousy over her mother's preference for the sons, especially the eldest, Mark. She, like many of Lehmann's heroines, longs for her mother's love, but, where Lehmann's women seem to adjust to their situations, Mary will be plagued by the lack of her mother's love throughout her life. In one example, as a child she builds a tower out of bricks, but her mother is too absorbed with her brother's snowman to pay attention:

> Something swelled up, hot and tight, in Mary's body and in her face. She had a big bursting face and a big bursting body. She struck the tower, and it fell down. Her violence made her feel light and small again and happy.
> 'Where's the tower, Mary?' said Mamma.
> 'There isn't any tar. I've knocked it down. It was a nashty tar.'[130]

Mary's anger at her mother, and the connection of that anger with the destruction of a masculine symbol are what make the passage especially notable. Sinclair uses obviously Freudian symbols frequently. One can make comparisons to Lehmann's text, but they are often tenuous. The cherry tree, for example, that is cut down at the end of Dusty Answer can be read as a symbol of not only childhood and things past, but also standing for the males in Judith's life who have in some way let her down: her father, Charlie and Martin, who all die, or Roddy and Julian. Mary Olivier knocks down her tower, but it is not Judith who actually cuts down

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[130]May Sinclair, op.cit., p. 10.

this tree.

Post-war women, it seems, have tremendous trouble merging with another and yet still retaining their individuality. Clarissa Dalloway finds withdrawal necessary in order to complete her sense of self. In Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage Miriam Henderson wants someone (Densley) who will not tamper with her mind, someone who will adore her, pay her homage, yet allow her inner freedom because he is incapable of understanding her.

Young Judith in Dusty Answer has similar feelings when briefly considering marrying Martin. She is in pain for she loves Roddy, and like Miriam, wants to be left to her own thoughts, yet have Martin there adoring her. She knows he "loved to have her beside him, behaving nicely and looking pretty, shewing interest, and smiling when it was seemly".(288) She tries to fool herself into believing a life with him could work:

> You would be thought lucky indeed to live here. Perhaps the land might compensate, drug the mind and give it slow contented musings. Perhaps you could escape from Martin and feel alone with it....(283)

And:

> If only their marriage could be a perpetual sitting on a green bank by a stream, watching him tolerantly, almost tenderly, with a quiet pleasure in his bodily magnificence, with a half-contemptuous smile for his happiness, and yet with a comfort in the knowledge of it, and in the knowledge that her mere presence was sufficient for it, while her mind was off on its own, worlds removed from him!(288-89)

All of Lehmann's women are seeking the paradox of independence combined with a full fusion with their lovers. Often these women

define themselves as feminine according to concepts of femininity set down by men, but at the same time rebel against the implications of such conceptions. Their definitions are part of and in some cases synonymous with their search for reality. They aim for a real sense of self-autonomy and need to fight against being considered objects and mere passive beings. Lehmann's women, Rhys's women--all show this struggle as still on-going, and never completely successful. Traditional standards of feminine comportment such as self-sacrifice, subservience, timidity and maternality are concomitant with those passive tendencies society has defined as feminine qualities. Consequently, in their relations with men--relations that appear to become increasingly strained the further one goes in the period--these women often submit, or, if they do not, are ostracized from society. It becomes clear when looking at the men in Lehmann's novels (with the exception of Rickie, the men being seen always through the women's eyes), that the conventional standards for masculinity are as much at odds with reality as the women's standards for themselves.

Lehmann's women rebel in some cases, are submissive wives in others, but they all recognize the difficulties of their roles. Afraid to be considered masculine in a society which labels intellect as a trait belonging to men, and supported by the psychology that considers anatomy as destiny, these women of extreme sensitivity and great intelligence have found ways to order their intellects into shapes that will be considered feminine.

Their inner struggle regarding men takes various forms in Lehmann's texts. Sometimes a woman will assume a male role by falling in love with another woman, or she might act with surface submissiveness while inside she may feel anger and resentment. Many of them ultimately reject men, at least for a while, in their quest for individuality and self.

Dinah and Olivia are an examples of women who are sexually experienced, have known youthful romance and its loss, but must continue to live on in a world no longer structured by the familiar stories. They, and all characters like them, embody a general question for women, and for fiction: what happens when women's lives go on after the old endings, happy or sad?

Elizabeth Bowen's character, Cecilia, in To the North shares a similar predicament. Cecilia is a young widow--pretty, sociable, but still "bewildered" and uncertain of direction after her brief marriage and her husband's sudden pneumonia.[131] If Cecilia represents experience, her opposite in the pattern is innocence. Her sister-in-law, Emmeline, wonders at the novel's outset whether "she would love. Nothing could be as dear as the circle of reading-light around her solitary pillow."[132] Emmeline's story in To the North is the familiar story of a romantic, unscrupulous young man, similar in ways to Lehmann's novels. It counterpoints Cecilia's

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[131]Elizabeth Bowen, To the North (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) p. 13.

[132]Ibid., 26.

movement from experience to perhaps a kind of sadly diminished innocence in a marriage of friendship and respect, if not romantic bliss, reminiscent of Lehmann's married couples. But Lehmann's novels are always studies of lost innocence and disillusionment combined with a growing awareness of the adult world of disappointment.

Whatever new possibilities have opened for twentieth-century women, Bowen seems to say that Cecilia and Emmeline can only shape their fates in relation to men. Lehmann's women, however, shape their lives initially by men; they long for love, but ultimately when that love disappoints them, they turn either inward to themselves for strength, or outward to nature or art or to other members of their sex.

Before examining the nature of women's friendship, however, I will address the question of homosexuality in Lehmann's fiction, which, in some cases, is so closely related to friendship as to be indistinguishable.

Homosexuality is a subject Lehmann treats directly or indirectly in all of her novels. Lehmann's treatment of homosexuality is an important consideration when assessing her works beside those of her more celebrated contemporaries, such as Virginia Woolf or Dorothy Richardson.

The portrayal of homosexuality as early as 1927, in Dusty Answer, places Lehmann as one of a group of forerunners who discuss

the subject frankly and without negative stereotypes. This alone might be enough for her to be considered "modern". Lehmann's treatment of homosexuality is more advanced than that of many of her contemporaries, including Virginia Woolf, by the mere fact of its comprehensiveness. Both Woolf and Lehmann portrayed homosexual characters as early as 1925 and 1927, but while Woolf generally stereotyped her characters[133], Lehmann's were made to be "normal" and even glamourous. Hugh, for example, in A Note in Music is presented as the most desirable and charming character among many. Woolf's depiction of Sally Seton is positive, but too slight and ambiguous, since Sally is not a lesbian. The subject was discussed by writers such as Radclyffe Hall, but Lehmann remains distinct for her novels contain some of the earlier positive portrayals of homosexuals by a heterosexual writer.

Jeanette H. Foster points out that Dusty Answer was probably the major literary influence on the whole group of novels, primarily by American writers, dealing with homosexuality in boarding schools and college dorms.[134] It should be noted too that The Well of Loneliness was published in England in 1928, a year after Dusty Answer.

Ambivalence over gender, androgynous and homosexual characters

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[133]The character of Miss Kilman in Mrs. Dalloway is one example, as her name is chosen to indicate.

[134]Jeanette H. Foster, Sex Variant Women in Literature (London: Frederick Muller, 1958) p. 288.

appear in Lehmann's fiction, and there are often faint distinctions between them, as will be examined further in the discussion of female friendships. Lehmann's description of Geraldine Manners, for instance, is a good example of this. The reader is presented with Judith's subjective vision when meeting Geraldine, and therefore it is difficult to decide if she is really ugly or really beautiful:

> That broad heavy face and thick neck, those coarse and masculine features, that hothouse skin: What taste Jennifer must have to find her attractive!...
> Oh, no, it was no good saying that. In spite of all, she was beautiful: her person held an appalling fascination. She was beautiful, beautiful. You would never be able to forget her face, her form. You would see it and dream of it with painful desire: as if she could satisfy something, some hunger, if she would. But she was not for you. The secret of her magnetism, her rareness must be for ever beyond reach; but not beyond imagination.(196)

But it is obvious that Geraldine is a lesbian, and Jennifer does have a lesbian relationship with her, something she never achieves with Judith. Yet the descriptions of emotions in Dusty Answer between Jennifer and Judith could easily be read as romantic. For instance, as Jennifer and Judith bathe together naked, Judith whispers to herself "in a voice that could never speak out:

> 'Glorious, glorious Pagan that I adore!' [...]
> 'You are so utterly lovely,' Jennifer said watching her.
> They swam in cool water in a deep circular pool swept round with willows, and dried themselves in the sun.[...] Slowly they opened books, dreamed through a page, forgot it at once, laid books aside; turned to smile a each other, to talk as if there could never be enough talking; with excitement, with anxiety, as if to-morrow might part them and leave them for ever burdened with the weight of all they had had to tell each other.
> Judith crept closer, warming every sense at her, silent

> and utterly peaceful.[...] You could not do without Jennifer now.(157-58)

And:

> Always Jennifer. It was impossible to drink up enough of her; and a day without her was a day with the light gone. Jennifer coming into a room and pausing on the threshold, head up, eyes wide open, darting round, dissatisfied until they found you. That was an ever fresh spring of secret happiness. Jennifer lifting you in her arms and carrying you upstairs, because she said you were [...] too lovely anyway to walk upstairs like other people. (150-51)

Judith and Jennifer kiss, call each other darling, and tell each other "I love you."

> 'You mustn't love anybody,' said Jennifer. 'I should want to kill him. I should be jealous.' Her brooding eyes fell heavily on Judith's lifted face. 'I love you.'(149)

And:

> She remembered Jennifer saying once, suddenly: 'There's one thing certain in my life: that is, that I shall always love you."(176)

Even Martin is suspicious or jealous of Jennifer and he asks Judith,

> 'Who's that Jennifer person you're always with?'
> 'A person I'm very fond of---' She flared at his tone.
> 'Never see you anywhere without her,' he muttered.(147)

At the end of the novel Judith tries to return to Jennifer in an attempt to reach back to the warmth and security and love she felt with her, feelings she was unable to sustain with men. Her desire to escape from sexual relationships at this point reveals her disillusionment and weariness. It also illustrates a predominant theme in Lehmann's novels: the inability of men and women to be successful with one another.

Because certain characters are undefined, they remain ambiguous or enigmatic, particularly in terms of their sexuality. There is Roddy, for example, with whom Judith is in love. Roddy can be loved by Judith because he is part of herself; she creates him. Roddy's emotions are not entirely explored in Dusty Answer, only suggested. But as Sydney Janet Kaplan points out,

> since the novel is about [Judith's] world and her reactions to it, her inability to make Roddy a complete human being gives us a clue to her failure in handling her relationship with him. Roddy is "shadowy" because Judith sees only the characteristics which are similar to her own--his loneliness, his lack of ease in the world, his romantic disgust with conventionality. If Judith had been able to view him differently, to explain him clearly, fully, to make him into a complete human being, the obsessiveness of her perception would have disappeared.[135]

Kaplan also suggests that the shadowy side of Roddy is a hint of his love affair with Tony Baring. This is what makes for his aloofness, frigidity, and eventually his harsh treatment of Judith. While Roddy's sexuality is ambiguous, Tony, on the other hand, is portrayed as obviously homosexual, and Judith even without knowing the nature of his relationship to Roddy, is jealous of him. Judith, on her side, does not realize that Tony is equally jealous of her, confirming Roddy's sexual ambivalence. This androgynous strain that surfaces first in Dusty Answer is again an indication of the changing relations between the sexes which is one of the causes of failed relationships in Lehmann's novels.

Mrs. Dalloway appeared in 1925; Dawn's Left Hand came out in

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[135]Sydney Janet Kaplan, op.cit., p. 132.

1931. Judith's relationship with Jennifer follows a pattern similar to those of Miriam Henderson and Amabel[136] in Dawn's Left Hand and of Clarissa Dalloway and Sally Seton in Mrs. Dalloway. The three introspective women are drawn to the three vivacious and bold women. Jennifer[137], like Amabel or Sally, represents spontaneity. She is not only radiantly beautiful, but also speaks her mind and is the centre of attention for the whole group of girls of which Judith is a part. Judith is attracted to her because of her looks, as well as her independence and boldness:

> The suddenness, thought Judith--the sureness, the excitement!...glorious, glorious creature of warmth and colour! Her blue eyes had a wild brilliance between their thick lashes.... Oh, Jennifer! [...] sympathy flowed like an electric current between them.(138-39)

Like Clarissa and Miriam, the reflective and questioning heroine compares herself with the more independent woman; rather than envying her, she loves her because the other woman embodies all the qualities that she herself lacks. Judith is aware that part of the attraction arises from the need to complete herself through Jennifer:

She was the part of you which you never had been able to untie

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[136]Although some critics have argued that Miriam's love for Amabel, and Ulrica before her, is obsessive, competitive, and finally a narcissistic union with another. Judith's love for Jennifer, if this is correct, is different, for while Judith recognizes that she uses Jennifer to complete herself, she does not in the end become obsessive over Jennifer when she leaves, even though Judith loses that "part" of herself.

[137]Jennifer was modelled in part after Lehmann's college friend, Grizel Hartley who embodied these same traits.

> and set free, the part that wanted to dance and run and sing, taking strong draughts of wind and sunlight; and was, instead, done up in intricate knots and overcast with shadows; the part that longed to look outward and laugh, accepting life as an easy exciting thing; and yet was checked by a voice that said doubtfully that there were dark ideas behind it all, tangling the web; and turned you inward to grope among the roots of thought and feeling for the threads.(158)

She even imagines, although falsely, that she had drained the life from Jennifer with her own needs:

> There's something about [Jennifer]--people don't seem to be able to love her clearly and serenely: they have to love her too much. Everything gets dark and confused and aching, and they want to--touch her and be the only one near her; they want to look after her and give her everything she wants. It's tiring. And then when they're tired she gives them back life. She pours life into them from herself.
>
> She stopped short, seeing in a flash how it had always been between herself and Jennifer. Tired, you had come again and again to her, pressing close to be replenished from her vitality. But Jennifer had not drunk life from you in return: quietness and tenderness and understanding, but not life. And the quietness has passed into sadness--yes, you know now you had seen it happening sometimes,--sadness, flatness: the virtue had gone out of her in the incessant giving of herself, the incessant taking on of an alien quietness. You had wanted too much, you had worn her out. Perhaps after all you had been unlucky to Jennifer, committed that crime of trying to possess her separateness,--craved more than even she could give without destroying herself. So in the end she had gone to someone else more wholesome for her nature.(194)

But Jennifer is different from Amabel and Sally. Jennifer doesn't retreat into a submissive marriage at the end, and unlike Amabel and Sally, she never shows any interest in men. There is little ambivalence concerning Jennifer's feelings.

Yet Lehmann allows for some ambiguity surrounding homosexuality in her novels in order to create intrigue. In the following passage between Marigold, Rollo's sister, and Olivia it

is unclear whether Marigold is unsure of her own sexuality, or whether, as Olivia thinks, she is suspecting Olivia of being a lesbian.

> [Marigold] drew Olivia close to her,an arm round her waist.[...] They leaned against one another. Marigold said abruptly, her voice pitched at its highest: 'Do you know any queer people?'
> 'Lots." Olivia laughed. 'Nothing but...'
> 'what I meant was--you know--what d'you call 'em--Lesbians and things....'
> 'Oh, I see.' Olivia made a slight involuntary movement away.
> 'Oh, a few, I s'pose.'
> 'Do they fall for you?'
> 'No--not particularly....'
> 'I wonder what it would be like.... I don't <u>think</u> I should like it. I've never felt inclined that way... but I once knew someone who was. You never know.... Lots of people are, aren't they? Far more than one realises....'
> 'I expect so.'
> 'Have you ever felt attracted like that?'
> 'No, I never have.'
> 'I bet if I were like that I'd make a pass at you.' She patted and stroked Olivia's hip with a light clinging touch.
> 'Thank you. The same to you.' Olivia put up a hand and ran it quickly over the curls.... 'But I feel foolish, uneasy....'
> 'D'you remember that time you stayed the week-end and we slept in the same bed and pretended to be a married couple?[...]'
> 'I remember.'
> A silence fell. The smell, the weight, the darkness of plush, mahogany and leather seemed to Olivia to swell out around them, closing them in suffocatingly. What's she driving at? She turned and looked at Marigold and said: 'But that's not why my marriage didn't work.'
> 'No, of course... I didn't mean that....'
> <u>Oh, didn't you</u>... But why? My looks? A rumour? A sudden, reckless shot of her own at random?(106-7)

In her second novel Lehmann again has a main character who is homosexual. Hugh has no ambivalence about his sexuality as Roddy does. The novel explicitly illustrates that Hugh has no sexual interest in women, and just as clearly that none of the women seem to notice it. Since Hugh's genuine, and upper class, geniality

masks his own unresolved unhappiness, he offers the promise of cheerful experiences and the gift of male courtliness without the demand of a giving up of oneself.

The clandestine shame associated with homosexuality had been discarded in the previous generation, among Lehmann's Bloomsbury friends, yet still the subject remained for years a phobic, yet tantalizing subject to the public, as evidenced when Lehmann said:

> 'I was thought rather advanced to talk about homosexuality in my books in the early 30s--in A Note in Music there is a homosexual, not explicitly discussed, in the way it is discussed now, but it was "advanced" enough for people like E.M. Forster to write and say how splendid and well done.'[138]

Lehmann treats the subject as she does all other highly charged social issues, with honesty, sensitivity, and appropriateness. Her sensitivity and unbiased outlook, however, do not preclude typically hostile thoughts, that would be termed ridiculously politically incorrect today. Clare turning to Ralph Seddon thinks, "if this young man continues to take no interest in me, I shall know he's one of those".(168) And in Dusty Answer Judith wonders if Roddy is "a fairy."(175) These are merely transcriptions of common remarks, belonging to a more inclusive picture of the actual social milieu. Sometimes Lehmann will caricature a homosexual character as is the case of the nurse in The Weather in the Streets. After Olivia been out with Rollo, the nurse says to her:

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[138]Philippa Toomey, op.cit., p. 9.

'That's a nice frock. Suits you, that long line. I like white. Not that I wear it myself--get enough of it on duty--[....] But I always think white looks distinguished. You always notice a woman in white--I mean a well-dressed woman.'
'I'm glad you like it. [...] I'm sleepy, I must go to bed. Good-night nurse.'
'Want to undress here and warm your toes a bit?'
'Oh, thank you so much--it's sweet of you--but my sister told me to look in on her.'
'I see.'
The blue eye screwed down, cold, speculative, obscene....Now what have you been up to? You're not the stand-offish sort, I know you. Come on now: no flies on me either. Men! (140-41)

Yet even in including these transcriptions and caricatures, Lehmann never questions, as the public certainly has, the existence of love between homosexuals. Lehmann treats Jennifer's love for Judith, or Hugh's love for Oliver no differently from Dinah's love for Rickie, or Olivia's love for Rollo.

Homosexual secondary characters also abound in Lehmann's texts: there is Ralph Seddon, Oliver Digby, Adrian, Kit and Trevor, and there are hints surrounding James, Olivia's brother and Uncle Oswald, and perhaps even Maisie Thomson.

While Lehmann's fiction is permeated with the destructive aspect of relationships, it also attests to the power of friendship, particularly friendships between women. As mentioned above, Lehmann draws a fine line, or an ambiguous line, between women's friendships and homosexuality. It is, for example, difficult to tell whether Judith loves Jennifer in the same way that Jennifer loves Judith. It is unlikely that she loves Jennifer sexually (although still unclear), but very certain that she loves

her intensely, illustrating the potency of feelings between women, as well as the difficulty in separating erotic love from platonic love.

Judy Simons perceptively notes that "the delicate treatment of the relationships between Judith and the Fyfe boys,[...] between Judith and Jennifer Baird, illuminates the tenuous nature of the boundaries between friendship and love, and the strength of women's intimacy,[...]."[139] Simons also explains how "the affection of one can easily merge into the erotic dimension of the other",[140] which is something also noticeable in the relationship between Judith and Jennifer. Still experimenting with her sexuality, Judith's erotic feelings towards Jennifer are ambiguous, while Jennifer's are more certain, as is evident in her complete rejection of Judith after meeting Geraldine, her inability to be near Judith, and her guilt. When she finally writes to Judith after they have both left Cambridge, she explains her sexuality in a circuitous way:

> I promised I'd explain everything, didn't I, but it's not much easier now than then [....] I loved you frightfully from the very first. I used to think about you night and day. I was in a fever about you. I began to be absolutely afraid of my feelings for you, they were so extremely strong. I couldn't understand them. Then I met Geraldine, and I realized a lot of things. You know what I am--she swept me off my feet.(338)

Judith's language, when speaking to or about Jennifer, might suggest a more than platonic friendship. To Julian she confides,

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[139]Judy Simons, op.cit., p. 40.

[140] Ibid., p. 34.

'I'd go to her now, this minute, if I knew where she was. But I don't.'
There was a silence; and then he said gently:
'I'll find her for you if you like, my dear.'
She stretched a hand across the table to him.
'No. Help me forget her . . . and everything else . . .'
(310-11)

Yet this could also be the language used to describe ardently devoted friends.

In the same way that Jennifer's erotic feelings merge into her friendship with Judith, so, too, do Judith's feelings about love and marriage as the natural step after making love, contrast with Roddy's mere affection for her. In The Ballad and the Source it is equally possible that Maisie may wish something stronger than platonic friendship with Rebecca, but, like Judith, she is still questioning her own sexuality.

James Gindin writes that "the shift from themes of rivalry to those of what women share reflects Lehmann's focus, throughout the novels, on women's intense need to articulate an interior self".[141] This is reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's comment in A Room of One's Own that "Chloe liked Olivia" when "Cleopatra did not like Octavia",[142] signifying a change in women's writing of the period. It is true Lehmann's heroines desperately strive and need to express an interior self, often separate from men. Often they turn inward to introspection, or outward toward other women in whom

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[141]Gindin, op.cit., p. 88.

[142]Virginia Woolf, op.cit., p. 78.

they find their likeness. There was never, however, a shift as Gindin suggests, for the theme of what women share is evident as early as Dusty Answer or A Note in Music; and the theme of rivalry is still ongoing in The Echoing Grove. Sister rivalry in Lehmann's works (Dinah and Madeleine, Olivia and Kate) probably derives its basis from her own experience, but it is always a secondary theme. On the other hand, the bond between women, often stretching from generation to generation, is a predominant theme in all Lehmann's novels.

Lehmann demonstrates that the bonds between women recurrently outlast the passion and love found in heterosexual relationships. In A Note in Music Norah MacKay takes her husband, Grace, Hugh and Clare for an outing to her cousins' estate. Over the course of the afternoon she feels increasingly distraught and left out of the fun, until she finds her wise, older cousin Mary. As Nora thinks of her cousin she says, "She's the only person I ever knew who sees - human relationships in their right proportions." And

> Suddenly, as she spoke, she felt how true this was, and how important to her. Why had she spent so many years away from all contact with her--walking, perhaps down a blind alley till this moment?(159)

While Grace and Nora are quite dissimilar, the strength of their friendship is revealed in the novel. Yet this bonding does not extend to every woman simply because she is of the female sex. Of Clare Grace thinks:

> It was no more possible to think of this perfected, shining creature as a fellow-woman than to claim kinship with an angel

or a wax mannequin. (164)

Invitation to the Waltz begins the portrayal of the Curtis sisters' relationship that is continued in The Weather in the Streets. While it is clear a certain amount of rivalry exists, it is also clear the sisters love and care very much about each other. As adolescents they are allied together, Kate as the elder, often taking the role of protector. On her seventeenth birthday Olivia, opening her presents, finds the silk promised to make her a gown for the Spencer's ball:

> Tears pricked her eyes. [...]
> 'Such a glorious present!'[...]
> 'The colour ... my favourite colour.'
> Mrs. Curtis said deprecatingly:
> 'I should have chosen a pretty pale pink or blue. I like a young girl in delicate shades. Sweet-pea colourings: Aunt May and I always wore them. This seems a bit strong for a first evening-dress. But Kate insisted.
> 'Yes, I chose it,' said Kate languidly. Her taste was law.[...]
> The sisters standing shoulder to shoulder looking at the glowing material communicated without a word or glance. It's what you wanted, isn't it? Oh, perfect. Thank you, thank you.(22-23)

Olivia, when asked by Rollo what she does, replies, "Reading, mostly. And going for walks by myself. And talking to Kate - that's my sister."(277) By the end of the novel, however, a subtle change has taken place, and Olivia realizes she will not confide her feelings to Kate any more. She is growing up.

In The Weather in the Streets, while the love between Olivia and Kate is apparent, this feeling is continued as Olivia almost tells Kate she is pregnant with Rollo's child, but decides against

it, keeping it and the agony completely to herself. Neither does she confide in Etty, but a bond is nonetheless forged as Etty shares with her the fact of her own abortion and gives her the name of the doctor who performed it. Connected to another female who has shared her predicament, Olivia feels less totally alone. Social friendships are presented as nurturing ties that, instead of pitting women against society, help their passage within it. Since their destiny is most likely sexual and heterosexual, their salvation repeatedly lies in friendship. Female support and acceptance of each other, passed down generation to generation, becomes one of the most important ways in which women aid women and sustain each other.

For example, even when Lady Spencer arrives on Olivia's doorstep to persuade her to break off the relationship with Rollo, Olivia still feels drawn to the woman, compelled to confide in a member of her own sex who would understand: "Lady Spencer, I'm in trouble, help me. You know everything. Beloved benefactress, infallible..."(282) And Lady Spencer similarly declares her affection of Olivia:

> 'This is not perhaps the time to speak of one's own feelings, but I've always been fond of you, Olivia.' Her voice was unemotional but convincing.
> 'And I of you. More than fond.'[...]
> 'I've always so admired you and Kate. It seems such a pity--I felt so grieved when your marriage--I should rejoice to see you with a happy home of your own.'(281)

It is the camaraderie that exists between Olivia and Anna, however, that best illustrates the enduring capacity of female

friendship. Olivia is able to tell Anna that Rollo is her lover and feels relief for having spoken to someone about it. Later she comforts Anna after the news of Simon's death. While not a predominant component of the novel, the intensity or sincerity of their friendship is suggested:

> 'Have you any plans?' [Anna asks Olivia after Simon's death]
> 'Well, no. I'm a bit nebulous still, I'm afraid.' Say it cheerfully, don't bother Anna with your totally blank future.
> 'I've had an invitation to Paris. But I'm not sure if I'll go.
> 'I hope you'll come here tremendously often. I hope everybody will.'
> 'Thank you, Anna, how lovely.... I must think about a job, I suppose. Turn a penny somehow.'
> 'Oh, about that, said Anna. 'I meant to write but I didn't: Simon left me some money--wasn't it angelic of him? Four hundred a year. It's more than I want and you're to have half. I'm arranging it. I know he'd be pleased. The letter said I was to do exactly what I wanted with it, but keep half anyway--so that means he knew I'd rather share it.' She began to unbutton her stiff dress.
> No words came.
> 'Get along to bed,' said Anna, looking up, smiling. 'You look like nothing on earth.'
> She held out her arms and gave Olivia a quick hug, saying: 'It's nice to have you here.'(377)

Of Lehmann's novels it is The Ballad and the Source that portrays the link between women in its most powerful expression, as well as its most destructive. The treachery and misfortune is passed down from generation to generation--from mother, Mrs. Jardine, to daughter, Ianthe, and to granddaughter, Maisie. Yet the links that unite the generations are so tenacious that, while Maisie initially loathes her grandmother, by the end she has made her truce, and comes to understand, accept and love her. There is also the relationship between Mrs. Jardine and Rebecca's

grandmother, Laura, which the reader understands was at one time extremely intimate. Rebecca observes the side of Mrs. Jardine that "loved Grandma so much that her voice altered when she spoke of her; [...] loved me for being her grandchild".(94) The battle over Ianthe estranges Laura and Sibyl, but their bond is strong enough for a reconciliation to occur after five years of separation. Of her friend, affectionately called Madrona, Mrs. Jardine exclaims, "My dear, dear Madrona. I knew she was the one person in the world I could trust--however long I had to be away." And Tilly describes their reunion to Rebecca:

> With that she steps inside and says: 'Shall I go and find her, Tilly, or had you better prepare her? I don't want to give her a shock.' And at that very moment your grandmother came down round the bend of the stairs, just up from 'er afternoon rest, and see 'er. She stops like she'd been shot. 'Sibyl!' 'Madrona!' she cries out. And she lets 'er cape fall on the floor and runs into 'er arms.(87)

Tilly and Mrs. Jardine have an equally special relationship although it too is complicated because of Ianthe.

The relationship between Rebecca and Maisie is another "close and emotional" friendship and is depicted as the continuation of the alliance between their grandmothers. Mrs. Jardine encourages them hoping, "this [...] generation would be friends again."(49) They do and Maisie becomes Rebecca's first adult female friend:

> Maisie was the first woman friend I ever had. There were plenty of girls, then, and afterwards, with whom I played games and exchanged confidences, but my relationship with Maisie was so far removed from the waist-entwined, I've got a secret, giggle and whisper it, cross your heart you won't tell level that I think of it now as adult. It was she whose steadfast passion and disillusionment, laid bare so firmly ,

> so without obliquity or reserve, first planted deep within the feathery shifting webs and folds of my consciousness that seed which grows a shape too huge, too complex ever to see in outline, clear and whole: the monster, human experience.(49)

The stories in The Gipsy's Baby, "Wonderful Holidays" in particular, reveal that the wartime situation (this time the Second World War) produced a bonding effect on the women who were left at home to manage everything while the men were at war. While bonds between women stretch back to time immemorial, there was a different connection that developed between women in reaction to the bonding that developed between soldiers in the war. For the duration of and even after the wars, many of the men placed the highest importance not on their relationships with wives or lovers, but on those with other soldiers or with the events of the wars themselves. The spiritual bond forged between men in the isolation of the trenches was, however, not so resilient outside of the battle zone when men were forced to confront the complexities of the "real" world. Therefore, an argument with a spouse, normally trivial, could become something much more, and many of the soldiers longed to get back to the trenches, and share the dangers with their friends. As one officer wrote in a letter:

> I should not stress too much the horror of the war to those who actually took part in it. I know my experiences were with an exceptionally united and successful body of men, and that to many the war was plain hell. But there was, to many of us, very much on the other side. Nor was this a joy in the actual fighting, nor a fascination with tawdry romance. There were greater things. You may say we were spiritually drugged and pathetically deluded. But never before or since have we found them. There was an exaltation, in those days of comradeship and dedication, that would have come in few other ways. And

> so, to those of us who had ridden with Don Quixote and Rupert Brooke on either hand, the Line is sacred ground, for there we saw the vision splendid.[143]

The women were left out of such intense and spiritually bonding encounters and, as explained earlier, the experiences were often such that they could not be articulated. The war, then, was responsible for restructuring pre-war society, particularly in relating to the changing of roles for women. Repeatedly women turned to artistic expression to express these newfound feelings. Lehmann subtly takes women's new roles into account in her writing.

In "Wonderful Holidays" the women, while not out fighting, still experience the emotional effects of the war as the men might. Mrs. Ritchie and Mrs. Carmichael walk together through the woods,

> talking of marriage, love, children, the war, [....] They passed the place where, in 1940, a stray bomb, jettisoned, had fallen; where splintered tree-trunks, smashed branches, charred and jagged, still stuck up stark in a tumultuous crater of crushed chalk and lacerated roots: war's eye, sterile, violent and dead, staring even here, through fringes of milky shoots and the wildfire mesh in the locks of living branches.(153)

In The Echoing Grove the link uniting the two sisters is the most complex. Madeleine and Dinah are not only connected by blood, but because they each love the same man. Obviously this establishes an animosity between them, compounding an existing rivalry, and they remain estranged from each other for fifteen years. But again

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[143]G.L. Dickinson, The Causes of International War (London: Swarthmore Press, 1920) pp. 5-6.

the bond between the women, in this case sisters, is shown to be stronger than the animosity, and powerful enough to reunite them after the death of Rickie and their mother, two people they shared. Rickie is added to the list of other similarities they have in common as women, and as sisters.

After they have both lost the men in their lives: husbands, lovers and sons, they find the consolation of still having each other. As Madeleine returns home, where Dinah awaits her, she thinks to herself:

> Thank God for the light behind the curtains in the lower windows, for the narrow comfort of being expected back. Dinah, instead of no one, waiting in the house: Dinah, of all people... Incredible.(270)

Dinah is her support, confidante and

> solid enough after one night of domicile to detect the sudden atmosphere of crisis, to say: 'What's wrong?' to receive the answer: 'Nothing,' with an air of unperturbed acceptance of the necessary interval: before it came, the breaking-point, the painful confidence, accepted, discussed, deliberated on, judged finally in the style of the old schoolroom days, the salad days of suitors.(270)

And when it is decided that Madeleine should go to London and try to speak with Jocelyn, her ex-lover, Dinah tells her: "You look a knock-out. Expect you when I see you. I'll have something cooked. Good luck."(271)

Intimate friendships between women may possibly be a means of asserting individuality or femaleness in a patriarchal society. These sentimental friendships differ from romances for, as Janet Todd observes:

> Unlike the sentimental romance which so often ruins, it aids and saves, providing close emotional support in a patriarchal world. If heterosexual love has proved violent or painful, it may even threaten and replace this love.[144]

In A Room of One's Own Virginia Woolf noted the dearth of female friendships in literature:

> I tried to remember any case in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends. There is an attempt at it in Diana of the Crossways. They are confidantes, of course, in Racine and the Greek tragedies. They are now and then mothers and daughters. But almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by and for the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex.[145]

A Room of One's Own was published in 1929; Dusty Answer, describing the powerful friendship between Judith and Jennifer was published two years earlier. Woolf's impression is a common one, but nonetheless mistaken. Eighteenth-century fiction is rich in presentations of female friendship, by both men and women writers. At the very beginning of the classical English novel, Samuel Richardson created Clarissa and Anna, while many women writers before and after him also wrote of female ties.

Therefore Lehmann's depiction of female friendship is distinct, not in the portrayal itself, as friendships between women existed in literature long before, but in the fact that rarely in Lehmann's fiction are the romantic attachments between men and

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[144]Janet Todd, Women's Friendship in Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) p. 3.

[145]Virginia Woolf, op.cit., p. 79.

women found to be lasting, when often the bonds between women are. What Lehmann did was to present believable representations of women in relationships of lasting friendship. Lehmann, as well as other writers who were a product of the First and Second World Wars, does what Woolf hoped, in catching

> those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words which form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex.[146]

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[146] Ibid., p. 81.

Problems of Judgment and Interpretation

If Lehmann's work is not entirely attuned to the technical innovations of modernism, it does share with the modernist movement the problem of moral ambiguity and the relativism of the post-war world.

One of the ways in which Lehmann's works reflect the transitional quality of her time, is in their notion of the inaccessibility of truth, exemplified particularly well in The Ballad and the Source. This novel is an example of how Lehmann examines objective truth without making moral judgments. In her review of the novel Diana Trilling notes:

> Miss Lehmann, running against the current of our time, refuses to be satisfied with absolute notions of right and wrong. She also avoids the great cliché of recent fiction, the substitution of psychopathology for moral and psychological understanding-- [147]

Throughout The Ballad and the Source Rebecca stumbles across contradiction after contradiction, and herein lies the truth. There are contradictions between what Mrs. Jardine tells the child and what she hears from other people and also what she can gather for herself. To Rebecca Mrs. Jardine is the most confident person she can imagine; but later Gil will tell her that Mrs. Jardine "hasn't

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[147]Diana Trilling, op.cit., p. 423.

much confidence".(245) Rebecca's attraction to Mrs. Jardine is immediate: "There was something about her lips and about her whole face--something dramatic, a sensuality so noble and generous it made her look austere, almost saint-like." Later she states to her idol bashfully, "I don't see how anybody could not ... love you."(104) Mrs. Jardine replies to Rebecca, "My dear, as it happens, you are entirely wrong. I can be hated." And Rebecca's own father as well as Maisie's father, and hence Maisie, distrusts anything Mrs. Jardine has to say. Yet Mrs. Jardine assures Rebecca that she does care for truth, "I will always answer, truthfully, any question you care to put to me. Truth is my foible."(110) Undoubtedly she believes this, convincing herself as she does Rebecca.

Rebecca is also quick to discover the contradictions within Mrs. Jardine's personality itself:

> For the first time in her actual presence the sense pierced me directly: that she was wicked. A split second's surmise. But when next moment I looked up at her, there was her profile lifted beautifully above me, serene and reassuring as a symbol in stone.(109)

In A Sea-Grape Tree Rebecca finally says to the ghost of Mrs. Jardine:

> There as usual you contradicted yourself. You are wicked, heartless, my father always said so. You tell me love is all--and then you shrug your shoulders. (84)

Rebecca's observations are as accurate as either Gil's or as Maisie's, for each possesses only a fragmentary truth about Mrs. Jardine. Like Lehmann herself, Rebecca refrains from making any

moral judgments about Sibyl Jardine and seems to be content with her vision of human beings as combinations of both some good and evil. Confronted by Mrs. Jardine's contradictory sides, Rebecca suddenly has a revelation about the complexity of human character:

> It came over me [...] that obviously no person was one and indivisible--one unalterable unit--but a multiplicity; so that everything about a person might be equally true and untrue, and I need no longer be puzzled by the badness of good people, and the other way round.(126)

The Ballad and the Source illustrates Lehmann's non-judgmental portrayal of her characters, as well as her depiction of the conflict between society and the individual, particularly the unjust treatment of women and the sexual politics that create this condition. Mrs. Jardine is a type of renegade woman whose survival depends on being able to negotiate tradional value-systems that are contrary to her interests. Viewing her own life as a tragedy, Mrs. Jardine says to Rebecca:

> Do you know what goes to make a tragedy? The pitting of one individual of stature against the forces of society. Society is cruel and powerful. The one stands no chance against its combined hostilities. But sometimes a kind of spiritual victory is snatched from that defeat. Then the tragedy is completed.(112)

In The Weather in the Streets Olivia is the individual who fights society. In her position as "the other woman" she must fight against her own family, the Spencers and also against a society that thinks poorly of her. Her discovery is once again the dusty answer characteristic of all Lehmann's novels.

Sibyl Jardine is a frustrated heroine trapped not only in a marriage that allows her no fulfillment, but also in a historical period that forbids her to express herself. Mrs. Jardine is a forerunner for the feminist movement, but her attempts to take a stand for the rights of women result in her expulsion from society and eventually her expatriation. Mrs. Jardine's ideas on the situation and education of women are ahead of her time and yet, she, like every woman of her generation, believes a woman needs a man in order to survive.(144) She goes from man to man, either in the form of lover, husband or protégé, perhaps in an unconscious attempt to recapture the son she lost.

The portrayal that The Ballad and the Source presents of society against the individual is combined with the novel's moral enquiry. In The Swan in the Evening Lehmann remarked "it would be difficult if not impossible to disentangle 'true' from 'not true';"(65) which is the prevailing theme throughout The Ballad and the Source as both Rebecca and the reader try to establish for themselves what they can consider "true" or "not true."

While Diana Trilling praises The Ballad and the Source in some areas, she criticizes Lehmann for leaving the reader with "the heavy burden of Mrs. Jardine's ambivalent morality". Trilling concludes by criticizing Lehmann's lack of moral passion. What Trilling objects to is that the narrator comes to understand Mrs. Jardine as well as anybody, but never judges her. Yet if she did, the purpose of the book would be lost, for it is Lehmann's goal to

show the impossibility of making correct moral judgments. Each narrator attempts to see the truth clearly, but, not knowing the complete story, each can judge only part of the truth. Lehmann leaves moral judgments to her readers. As Diana LeStourgeon states, "If the narrator intruded herself any more than she does, the novel would lose one of its most potent qualities--the fascination of a many-sided truth."[148]

There is a Jamesian spirit to Lehmann's fifth novel; but there is also an important difference between What Maisie Knew and The Ballad and the Source. As Diana LeStourgeon remarks, "James is a moralist; Miss Lehmann is not."[149] I would agree that James is a moralist and his novels are retrospective hypothoses. Lehmann, on the other hand, is trying less to make a point than to present a mood and write about a way of life.

The Ballad and the Source exemplifies one of Lehmann's strongest themes, the difficulty of ascertaining the truth about human character. And it is this that Ralph Seddon addresses in A Note in Music--that of the many "conflicting" realities ending with a question mark--the very ambiguity being the question mark:

> This might be the line to pursue: to see one reality and turn it inside out again and again, making of one many, and all conflicting; and ending with a question mark....(153)

The following words spoken by Maisie Thomson, express a young

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[148]Diana E. LeStourgeon, op.cit., p. 107.

[149] Ibid., p.91.

woman's perceptive understanding of the elusive nature of truth:

> Also she talked to me a bit about my mother--truthfully for once: I mean, as much as one person can see the truth.(234)

Rebecca is more of a romantic than Maisie and perhaps less pragmatic, and subsequently the perfect receptacle into which Mrs. Jardine can talk. But Rebecca finds herself in a state of moral confusion by being granted access into the adult world and being recipient to the different narratives (Mrs. Jardine's, Tilly's, Maisie's, Gil's, even Auntie Mack's). Thus by the end of the novel Rebecca, more an adult than a child, concedes that, "My reverence for art was intense but incoherent." The "black and white," "good versus evil" that was so clear in her childhood is now muddied. In revealing Rebecca's uncertainties, Lehmann also subtly reinforces her own beliefs that, especially during and just after the Second World War, judgement and truth are so hard as to be impossible--and equally, so complex that moralistic categories are irrelevant. Hence in suggesting the narrow boundary between art and delusion, at which Mrs. Jardine excels, The Ballad and the Source creates a complicated network of reference that collaboratively illustrates the impossibility of defining objective truth.

It should also be noted that critics bring to a text moral expectations shaped by their experience in the world of literature, as well as by the social, political and economic realities of daily experience. Because the narrator in Lehmann's novels often refrains from criticizing the characters and their actions, or holds naive

opinions which sometimes lead to contradictory judgements based on her own subjective viewpoint, readers' responses to these texts throw into relief their own ideological perspectives. Most critics who belittle or dismiss her novels betray an uneasiness at her refusal to levy punishment against egoists (Mrs. Jardine), adulterers (Rollo, Rickie), fornicators (Judith and Roddy), or homosexuals (Jennifer, Roddy, Hugh), an uneasiness heightened because the writer is a woman.

Lehmann's morality, however, finishes by being not one, but many--and all conflicting. In this way Lehmann comes as close to the truth as one could in the skeptical, fragmented, post-war world of modern writing. Her deep questioning all ends with a question mark, paradoxically answering the questions she raises by inviting further questioning. And this is probably how she would have wanted it in light of her own "lifelong obsessive search for the meaning (if any) of life and death."[150]

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[150]Gillian Tindall, op.cit., p. 201.

Conclusion

The question remains, does Rosamond Lehmann have a place in modern English fiction, and if so, on what merit? I think the answer is undeniably yes. Lehmann's writing demonstrates its debt to the past, in her reliance predominantly on great women writers of the nineteenth century. But, at the same time, her texts are far removed from those of her predecessors. Lehmann realized the necessity of finding new ways of artistic expression that better reflected her changing society and the disintegration of established values.

Her narrative technique, while always impressive, advanced with her later novels. By the time she wrote The Ballad and the Source and The Echoing Grove Lehmann was perfecting techniques developed by innovators such as Richardson and Woolf. Lehmann's use of stream of consciousness, subjective point of view, multiple consciousness and multipersonal narrative, together with her experiments in time dimension, distinguish her work as modern. Reviewing The Echoing Grove Brendan Gill described Lehmann's increasing maturity stating:

> She has not wrought her complicated threnody of love in order to make housewives cry; they must look elsewhere for that pleasure. Miss Lehmann takes her obligations as an artist hard

and would rather be sound than winsome.[151]

With each novel, Lehmann advanced further as a technically skilled writer. In 1933 George Dangerfield dismissed her because of her "preoccupation with people who, by age or character, are incapable of a full experience--"[152] By the time she wrote The Ballad and the Source and The Echoing Grove, she had more than proven this criticism untrue. Thus when critics have accused her of merely "poetizing" her own self and life, I think it fair to look at her characters: Olivia, as she emerges from a girl of seventeen to a complicated and believable woman of twenty-seven, the egocentric figure of Sibyl Jardine, Dinah and Madeleine--to see that Lehmann does indeed successfully depict the existence of another individual, not herself. D.S. Savage writes that "the first requirements of a good novelist [are] the ability to create living, credible characters whose life is projected into an interesting and significant narrative pattern."[153] Lehmann more than satisfies this requirement. Grace Fairfax is in so many ways different from Lehmann herself, and the character is a successful portrait of a middle-class, provincial woman, and genuinely believable.

Lehmann is also modern in her transferring of events described

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[151]Brendan Gill, "In Tiny Leaf," Review of The Echoing Grove, New Yorker, 23 May 1953.

[152]George Dangerfield, op.cit., p. 175.

[153]D.S. Savage, The Withered Branch: Six Studies in the Modern Novel (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950) p. 71.

from the outer world of action to the inner world of thoughts and emotion. This turning inward reflects the impact of psychology on the modern world. Like the modern psychological novel, Lehmann's works disregard, to some extent, external continuity and concentrate on the characters' inner world. However, while Lehmann uses the unconscious or the subconscious to replace exterior action, she does not do it to the same extent that Virginia Woolf and others did; she focuses on her heroines' subjective and inner states of consciousness while still incorporating outside events and historical movements.

All her works form studies of women's search for self-understanding, a topic crucial to the modernist's examination of individuality and self within society. Lehmann's acute analysis of the psychological and emotional states of mind of women who lived through the two World Wars forms a direct commentary on the modern female psyche. Her depiction of feminine sensibility places her next to those writers who were intent on probing the changed modern consciousness of the twentieth century.

Her handling of gendered identities, revealing the ambiguous and androgynous aspects of both men and women, is especially lucid. Likewise her treatment of sexuality--portraying women as sexual beings, talking, writing or thinking about themselves as such--is a departure from (most of) her predecessors. Lehmann was writing of homosexuality and abortion before such topics became commonplace. She may also be distinct from several contemporaries who, like

Woolf, treated sexual themes very allusively, via metaphor or symbol. Lehmann gives us heroines who are vibrantly aware of their own sexuality. And her unbiased and realistic depiction of homosexuality, in particular, deserves consideration next to that of such authors as E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence. Homosexuality exists in all her novels, and homosexuals and lesbians are often main characters, yet rarely stereotyped.

One finds intense and spontaneous feeling everywhere in Lehmann's work, and most of the time it presents a feeling of empathy for an emotional and natural climate. But while critics agree that Lehmann was a skilled and lyrical writer, one finds less agreement as to the permanence of her fiction in literary history. Most critics who have sought to generalize about her contribution to fiction have stressed her lyricism, wit, facility with language, and her understanding of the intricacies of human emotion, particularly those of women, and of women in love.

While Lehmann did write beautiful prose, when critics look only at this ignoring her subject and technique, they miss much of what Lehmann has to offer. Lehmann departs from the Victorian novel in revising conventional plot mechanisms. As Judy Simons has shown, Lehmann takes the basic romance formula, and rewrites the ending. Lehmann was primarily interested in the destabilizing aspects of love. There are no traditionally happy endings in Lehmann's works.

She is successful as a modern novelist for her ability to depict women's sensibility and then transcend it, in order to tell

us something about the fragmented society of the 1920s, 30s and 40s. John McCormick suggests that Lehmann begins

> where Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf left off. Sensibility for these later writers is not an end but a means; in this area experiment continues to take place, not the dramatic experiments in technique, but experiments in the possibilities of human communication which utilized earlier techniques.[154]

Lehmann's works effectively study both social and historical changes and reflect the dual quality of her historical period. In The Echoing Grove, for example, Mrs. Burkett represents the stability of the previous era, much in the same way as Lady Spencer does. Madeleine accepts her mother's principles, while Dinah rebels to lead a life in London Bohemia. Rickie, of a gentried class, realizes that his birth and his acceptance of fragmentation are tearing him apart.

To critics' charges that Lehmann, like Austen, ignores history, a feminist historian might respond that domestic life or the private life, in particular, is as historical and of as much value to our understanding of human nature as public wars. But, in fact Lehmann does not ignore history.

By revealing in great depth her characters' inner imaginations in reaction to outside forces, Lehmann is extremely effective in writing about her times. In each work she shows how the instability

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[154]John McCormick, Catastrophe and Imagination: An Interpretation of the Recent English and American Novel (London: Longmans, 1957) p. 89.

ck. op.cit.

of modern society influences the quality of relationships. Therefore in contrast with the socially conscious writings of others during this period, Lehmann's writing would at times seem untouched by the military and political events of the day. And while she was not as concerned with feminism or the economic problems of the lower classes in the way, for instance, that Rebecca West, she was highly sensitive to the cultural changes of her particular age. Lehmann's writing reflects the changed situation of the modern artist, and she conveys these feelings in a narrative that subtly alludes to the outside upheavals. Her texts are, in fact, studies of the between wars period, and the effects of her historical period. By studying the frequently destructive effect that drastic or unpleasant change has on her characters, Lehmann indirectly examines her era's social and cultural movements. The wars of recent history, for example, are closely looked at in her novels for their effects upon society. Fragmentation of the old Edwardian and Victorian societies becomes a unifying theme in her works. The problems caused by the wars, and of living through them, is everywhere implicit in her work. In stressing what passes away--be it the golden childhood of the Edwardian era or the traditional society of pre-war times--she succeeds, every time, in portraying the disillusion, uncertainty and neuroses accompanying a transitional society, as well as in evoking the presence of beauty, grace, and love.

I hope that this study has demonstrated how Lehmann's heroines

saw the world from the inside rather than the outside--and that her aim was the perfection of rendering private consciousness through style, not the achievement of an enlarged vision of the contemporary world. Thus when she is criticized for her artistic narrowness in writing about the emotions of women in love, one should remember that it is precisely Lehmann's skill at this that not only reveals the inner consciousness and feelings of her characters but also subtly takes into account the social and historical events of the times. Even though The Weather in the Streets, for example, explicitly eschews politics, the atmosphere speaks from and to the historic and social context of the thirties, lifting the novel beyond personal experience. Writing consciously about a woman's sensibility, Lehmann illuminates the way this time of confusion, violence, and betrayal affects women in love.

Finally, in her refusal to produce monologic judgments, and by portraying truth to be something inaccessible, Lehmann reveals her place in twentieth-century modernity. Her work stands out among her contemporaries for its subjective exploration into the nature of experience, where there emerges no absolute vision of life. Therefore, it is because of her developments on all these related fronts that Lehman is better than her detractors have allowed, and why she is not only representative of her time, but helped to shape it.

Lehmann shows us that while new problems arose for the liberated, post-war woman, as well as new techniques for handling

them, the fundamental problems remained the same for the twentieth-century woman as they did for the seventeenth-century woman. Lehmann writes perceptively of human relationships and human nature; adultery, homosexuality, madness, suicide, hatred and love are all treated in her works--and treated with a modern woman's vision.

Lehmann's work should be placed and considered in the grand tradition. She does write about the "big thing." She is concerned with the eternal problem: if two people do love each other completely, there is no way for it to end well. Lehmann's novels are not the highly articulated novels of manner and acute observation that Jane Austen gives us. They do not present the unreadable problem of style that later modernist texts do. Lehmann shows us heroines with immense courage to love and to want to love.

Lehmann always will have her critics, but then she also continues to have her admirers, who I believe may well outnumber the former. R.A. Scott-James writes the following about her work:

> I do not think there is any living English novelist whose work, at its best, and within its limits, so nearly reaches artistic perfection as Rosamond Lehmann.[155]

I hope this study has helped to illustrate her place among other twentieth-century writers such as Virginia Woolf and Rebecca West. No one wrote more beautiful prose or looked at the intricacies of human character and sexual politics more intelligently. Lehmann

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[155]R. A. Scott-James, Fifty years of English Literature (London: Longmans, 1951) p. 180.

gave her audience remarkable insight into the feminine psyche. The range of her subject matter is never wide, but her understanding of what it is to have been a woman in this century is comprehensive. Her work reveals in its humour, sympathy, and understanding a fully realized and significant portrait of female sensibility in the modern world.

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Appendix

PEN Dinner May 13- 1981

I am very happy to be here among
you all tonight - and deeply touched by the
kind things that Leslie and Sibylle and Francis
have said about me and my work. I say this
with the most genuine gratitude and humility &
my own feelings about my work are - and
always have been - the reverse of satisfied or
complacent -

Now that all my novels are about to be ~~re~~
available once again in paperback (thanks to the
Virago Press and Penguin Classics) I've been
obliged to take a long look at them again.
All sorts of complicated feelings have arisen:
surprise - dismay - dismay - surprise -
Occasional keen approval! But above all
a kind of sense of unease and discomfort in
my intide — as if a never written and
much better book were struggling to get out.
Forgotten Comments have flashed up on me again -
gratifying ones, depressing ones - things that
colleagues and critics said about me long ago.
For instance, only yesterday I recalled a remark
of my old friend J.B. Priestley: "Look here, Rosamond
do you realize none of your characters ever
put in a proper day's work?" Too true!
There's a lot more leisure and privilege in
my books than in any contemporary novel.
But we won't go into all that now.
A word or two about being 80 years old. It
does seem, on one level, a definite milestone
- chiefly I think because in youth and

But on another, deeper level it is an unreal milestone: because I cannot feel essentially exactly the same person. One values one's friends more and more – not only those still around us but those who are no longer here. In other words, those one loves become more and more treasured.

What Time does is to surprise us. This was said long ago of a particular great personage: 'A lady whom Time hath surprised.' But I think it is a universal human experience: Time for those to whom age has dealt a ~~crippling blow, and Time for those on whom age has crept up comparatively gently.~~ crippling physical blow; and Time for those, like myself, on whom age has crept up comparatively gently.

Of course one regrets a lot. Apart from personal failures, I regret not mastering Greek and Russian. Why didn't I? Because I was too lazy ----

On a particular occasion I remember dear Lettice advising us to learn touch-typing. Excellent advice. I've never learnt to type at all. I wish my memory retained reams of immortal poetry instead of popping up snatches of nursery rhyme and popular songs of the 20's and other fatuous debris. I wish – I do wish – I'd done more for PEN – particularly for writers in Prison.

Of course at my age one thinks a lot about death. I used to be afraid of it. But now I look forward to it – not in a morbid way. I know we go on

There remains my lifelong love affair with the English language — that potent intoxicant as Evelyn Waugh once called it. To see and hear it mishandled, degraded in the media causes me acute distress. I could give you many examples, but I won't. 'Law and order' for instance; heard almost daily on the box.

'Traumer' pronounced 'Trowma' — as if it was a German not a Greek word. 'Hopefully' meaning 'I hope', 'Let us hope'. That battle I fear is lost.

Misuse of personal pronoun — again almost past praying for — heard even on the lips of my nearest and dearest. For instance

Now — to conclude with some marvellous words, familiar to you all. After which, you shall hear a contemporary version

'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. Thy rod and staff shall comfort me.'

Now for an alternative, up-to-date version.

'The Lord and I are in a sheep-sheep situation and I am in a position of negative need. He prostrates me in a green-belt grazing area. He returns to original satisfaction-levels my psychological make-up, and switches me on to a positive behaviour format. Though I make embarrassing progress through the inter-

be instantiated by me. Your pastoral walking-aid and quadruped pick-up introduce me into a pleasurable mood-state.

There is a great deal more — but perhaps you have heard enough? I am not sure if the origin of this impressive piece of prose is ~~American~~ Some American Academy perhaps ....? Perhaps a glorious spoof? Can [illegible] what is now referred to as ~~as~~ of Franzen?

In any case let us be vigilant. ~~Let us~~ In these days of computers and mass-communication let us never say it couldn't happen here.

And now, thank you, thank you for ~~listening~~ ~~for~~ coming ~~coming~~ here tonight to celebrate my birthday: also for listening to me so sympathetically.

God bless you all.

Letter to my Brother

Dear John. May all be mirth
Feast intellectual, culinary as well,
To celebrate your seventy years on earth.
But should a sister swell—
However proud—His hearty PUBLIC chorus?...
Accept instead a (semi-) private page,
A backward glance with the long sight of age.

Let us remember how, the prospect all before us,
Softly sweet Thames began to run
Beside our parents' second daughter,
And not long afterwards beside their son.
Since then, how many bridges, how much water
Since you and I
Set out!.... Let's not philosophize or specify.

The prospect dwindles now, and the running tide
Upon which we have travelled—sometimes side by side—
Slackens.... And yet, how stealthily, still hurrying along,
Will bear away toys, relics, trinkets, prizes,
Pomps, medals, masks and other old discusses,
Will sweep us out of time and end our song.
Alone then, bearings lost, how will it be
For us?—how shall we fare?
Striving to breathe an unaccustomed air,
Facing at last our hidden selves may we
Take hands again; laugh again; agree,
If not before, after we reach the sea.

Rosamond.

The Day.

Here the white strand again; no change;
This gap in time revisited,
The fervent dream, the cryptic scene,
Moon, stars, transparencies once more:
A cryptic dream, the same; and strange;
Time past; time found again; time dead.

Again these cliffs, this blinding arc
Of powdered and silvered, rock-fenestrated;
Illuminating ray wherein
Our new-committed charts are lost,
The spectre-wrought traps to save: the dark
Spectre swings, falls, bleeds white, is gone.

Wave whispering, foam foam; and drift
Of foam-shell, sea-coral, leaf, weed, bone;
Wind-fret and fret of ripple; shift,
Silence; the moonfire-furrowed marsh
Dredging the pools; and I alone,
Expecting no one, not expected:
Ahriman Presence although human flesh
Abstract as water, blank as stone,
Reflecting naught, and unreflected.

Yet on this verge I still beheld
A weightless imprint, less than shade,
Starker than moon, as soft, as cold,—
Eternal Ghost, forever laid—
Once, by a double image made.

Rosamond Lehmann
1951